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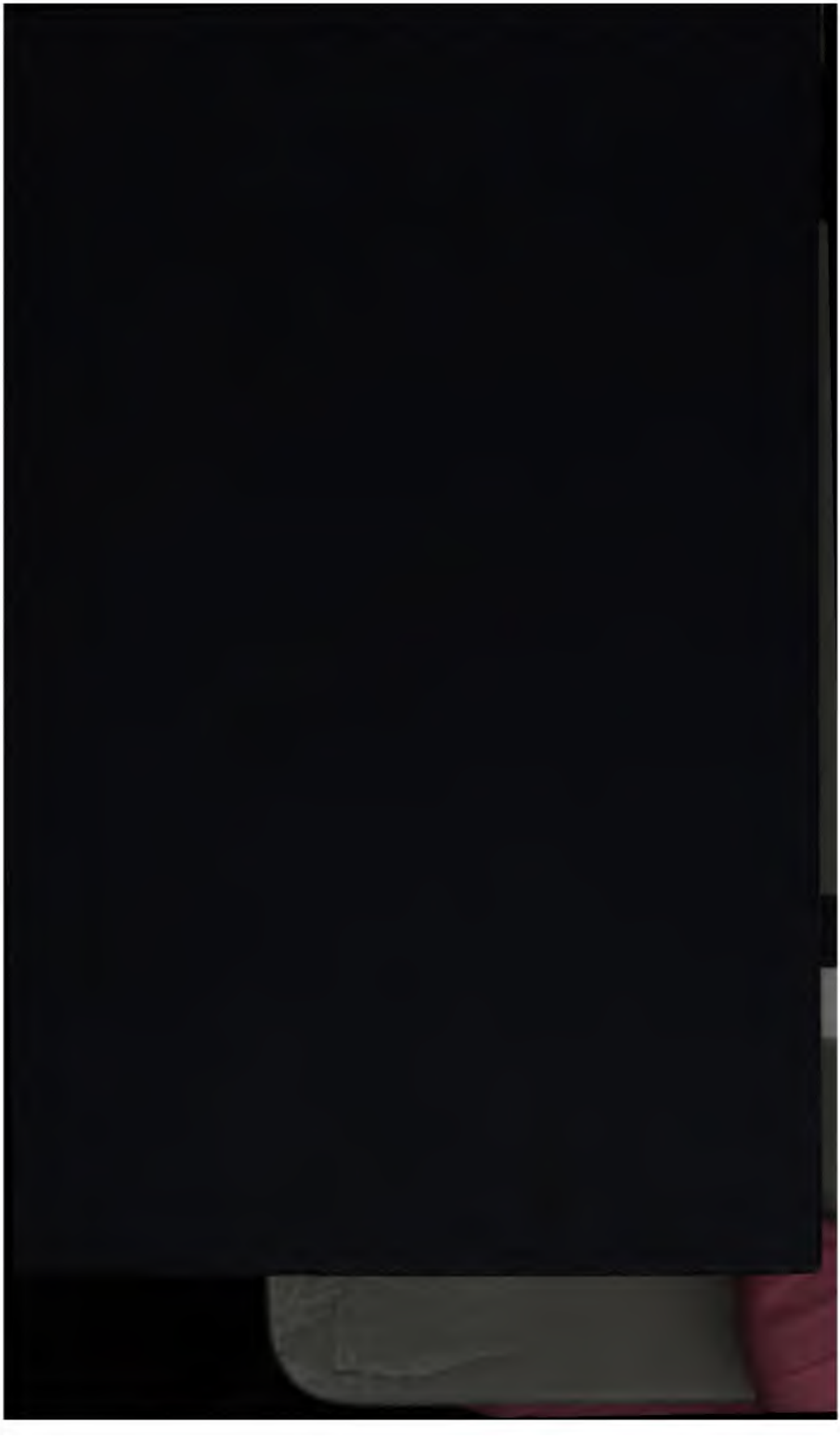

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THE

CABINET MINISTER.

VOL. I.

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THE

CABINET MINISTER.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," "MRS. ARMYTAGE,"
"THE HEIR OF SELWOOD," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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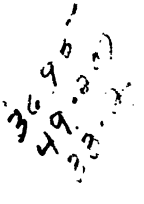


THE

CABINET MINISTER.

CHAPTER I.

Cet enfant sent son collége ;
Doublement sot et doublement fripon,
Par le jeune age, et par le privilége
Qu'ont les pédants de gâter la raison.

LA FONTAINE.

THE High Street of Oxford was crowded with joyous parties, equestrian and pedestrian, sunning themselves in the atmosphere of a fine afternoon after the learned labours of the day, when, after a hurried tap at the door of a dull room in the most obscure corridor of Christchurch, John Hartwell made an unceremonious entrance into the dingy study where his cousin

Peter sat occupied in his vicarious office of macadamizing the paths of knowledge for his noble pupil Lord Warkworth, only son of the Earl of Teviot.

"I knew I should find you tethered to the stake!" cried John, viewing with contemptuous pity the bilious complexion of the learned pundit, twenty of whose eight-and-thirty years had been spent within the walls of Granta in imbibing and imparting instruction. "You seem to have forgotten that you are to dine with me in hall to-day?"

"I shall be with you to the minute," replied the methodical Peter, looking at his watch. "But, having twenty minutes to spare, I thought I might as well"—

—"Devote them to mixing up the last dose for your poor patient!" cried John. "Much good may it do to both of you! So strict a course of physic will, doubtless, produce in you the sleekness becoming a stalled prebendary; but what advantage Lord Warkworth is to de-

rive from taking in these indigestible loads of erudition"—

"—He is on the eve of taking an honour,—the point nearest to his father's heart," interrupted Peter with unruffled benignity. "Lord Teviot made it from the first a *sine quâ non* with me that his son should distinguish himself at the university. The future patronage of the family was to be contingent upon the nature of my pupil's degree."

"Thank your stars then for the dull plodding youngster with whom you had to deal: slow and sure—the safest hack for the road! I should like to have seen you with either of my two lads on your hands; Sir Henry with his indolence, or Frank Grenfell with his brilliant flashes of talent and unimpressible volatility. Well! my boys will take no honours! Till last week I had my doubts about their getting safe through the gap; but Frank has been sitting up for the last three nights, and Sir Henry has renounced his claret these ten days past;

and we shall do, sir,—I flatter myself we shall do. On Saturday next, farewell Maudlin, and hey for Hampshire! and, if we have gained no great credit at Oxford, we have lost as little. There are not two more gentlemanly popular young men in the university than Grenfell and his cousin, or who will leave behind them a fairer reputation."

Peter Hartwell answered not a word; his notions of reputation differed widely from those of his flighty cousin.

"I never could understand your inducement," said he, evading the question, "to quit your comfortable home at the Rectory and return to Oxford, which you had recently quitted with such unfeigned delight."

"My father would not hear of my refusing Lady Mary Woodbridge's request," replied John, throwing his cane upon the table, to the utter discomfiture of Peter's erudite fly-notes and commentations. "My father owes his preferment, you know, to the late Sir Gideon."

"And you expect to owe yours to the present Sir Henry?"

"Exactly. The reversion of Hursley is promised me. Sir Henry got on badly at Eton with old Rudiment; and her ladyship fancied that he might do better at college with a tutor more nearly of his own age. When at home at Hursley Park for the holidays, the boy was always over at the Rectory, and used to go fishing, shooting, and hunting with me; and, just as his mother coaxed him into learning to spell with a gingerbread alphabet, she hoped to coax him into reading for his degree with a gingerbread tutor."

The classical quotation which Peter muttered in reply was fortunately inaudible to his cousin John.

"As might have been expected, I have done nothing with him," continued the candid John. "Nobody could have done less; and those who might have done more would have done worse; —there was only a choice between a dunce and a pedant."

"Of two bad things, then, you have made him the worst!" observed the sententious Peter.

"Pardon me, the dunce was ready made, it was only the pedant which would have cost me the trouble of making. I left things as I found them, quite well enough to pass muster in a man of twenty thousand a year."

"Mr. Grenfell, however, has not twenty thousand a year as an apology for his ignorance?"

"Not twenty thousand pence, I 'm afraid; but, with Frank's extraordinary abilities, he will take care that his ignorance is never discovered: nay, in mixed companies he will pass for a better informed man than your sap, Lord Warkworth; and, some day or other, I should not be surprised to find myself complimented as having turned out one of the most distinguished scholars of the day."

"You are more likely to reproach yourself with having neglected the cultivation of his shining talents," said Peter Hartwell.

"Not I. Before I consented to be driven back to Oxford by Lady Mary, I frankly apprized her of my deficiencies as a scholar; and was informed in reply, that my business was to push Sir Henry through the university without exposing himself. I was only to keep him clear of debt, danger, or rustication."

"But Frank — Frank Grenfell?"—

—"Was thrown into my bargain a few days previous to starting. Lady Mary cared as little for his welfare as people of her stamp usually care for their poor relations, exacted nothing on his behalf but that his expenditure should not exceed a certain stint; and such a life as that boy has led me! — Frank would have driven a more sober preceptor out of his senses in the course of his first term; and even I might have seen cause to complain of the double burthen saddled on me, had he not proved the most charming companion that ever crazed the brains of a poor tutor! There is not a finer young fellow on earth! No end

to the scrapes out of which I have been obliged to lend him a helping hand!—While you, my dear and reverend Peter, have been assisting your solemn prig of a pupil to medals and prizes, knowing no more of his real nature and pursuits than if you had been correcting his exercises in Cochin-China, I"—

He paused,—the door was flung open; and, attired in his academic robe of nobility, Peter Hartwell's dignified disciple glided in. On the eve of his public examination, Lord Warkworth, having thought fit to renounce his ride and recreation, made an unceremonious request for his tutor's attendance throughout the evening.

John Hartwell, disgusted by his lordship's dictatorial manners, was about to interpose with a reminder to his cousin of their previous engagement. But Peter prevented him by an interdictory gesture; and the visitor soon found himself bowed out by the lofty ceremony of the young coxcomb.

"Poor Peter!" mused Jack, as he whistled

his way down the dirty stone stairs of the classic temple of the Muses and Tories. "What a task, to have devoted three years of his life to cramming that pompous blockhead! — 'goose stuffed with sage!' as Frank Grenfell aptly calls him. — No matter! Lord Warkworth is to make his *début* as what is called a rising young man. Who knows? — perhaps Peter may live to figure in lawn sleeves, and the future Earl of Teviot as minister of state."

CHAPTER II.

Why should my son be a scholar, when it is not intended he should live by his learning?

By this rule, why should your son be honest, temperate, just, or charitable; since he depends not upon any of these qualities for a maintenance?

SWIFT.

JOHN HARTWELL'S pupil, Sir Henry Woodbridge, was the only son of a vain, doting, silly mother, whose chief object was to see him enjoying to the utmost the youth, health, and fortune of twenty thousand per annum.

Providence is said to mark its contempt of riches, in the persons of the mortals to whom opulence is assigned. Sir Gideon, the father of the young Baronet, was a man who, after displaying considerable tact in the amassment of

money as a city banker, had hastened to display his weakness at the West-end, by purchasing to be the partner of his old age a woman devoid of every qualification but high birth; while his only sister, a rich heiress, evinced her share in the family predilections by throwing herself and her large fortune away on the libertine younger brother of an earl. Sir Gideon, indeed, did not live to reap the fruits of his folly. Within two years of his marriage he was carried off by a pleurisy, caught, one bitter day in March, while bowing away from the portico of Hursley Park the coach and six of one of the lordly relatives of his lady. To his infant son, therefore, descended his immense fortune, and the baronetcy which a portion of it had purchased; and, from that moment, Lady Mary took double care that the winds of heaven, which had blown Sir Gideon into his grave, should not visit too roughly the cheek of little Sir Henry.

Having become a mother at the age when

many women become grandmothers, there was some excuse for the exuberant expansion of her ladyship's maternal sensibilities. Night or day the boy was not trusted out of her sight; and it was a wonder to most people how he grew up to ten years old under the suffocating weight of her kindness. He did, however, survive; and, considering all things, was not much more troublesome and disagreeable than other boys of his age.

It was now time to send him to Eton. Lady Mary, who was his only guardian, knew by aristocratic instinct the exact moment when removal to that polite seminary became indispensable; but, having omitted the usual preliminaries of teaching him to read and write, judged it better to make up for lost time by having him accompanied by a tutor of extraordinary zeal and erudition. Too learned a man could not be selected for so momentous a task; and it was in consequence of the squabbles which arose between young Wood-

bridge and his pedagogue during the days of Horace, Homer, and birch, that Lady Mary promised to select for her son, on his departure for Oxford, a bear-leader of less learning and more amenity. The good-humoured, gentlemanly son of their neighbour, the rector of Hursley, was the very man! As Jack Hartwell had quitted Oxford only five years before, he was of course *au fait* to all the existing modes and customs of college life; and it sufficed that he had scuffled through his ordination to the dignities of Rev. and M.A., to secure him a private tutorship of five hundred a year, and the reversion of the rich living of Hursley. Further confirmation of the contemptuous distribution of the good things of this world, manifested in the dispensations of Providence!

That Francis Grenfell became the companion of his wealthy cousin at college, was in a great measure the result of accident. Left in narrow circumstances by the death of her honourable spendthrift, Mrs. Grenfell had been com-

pelled to apply to her brother's wealthy widow in behalf of the boy and girl, to whom her pittance of four hundred a year could not afford an adequate education. Not that the widow indulged in the idle notion of bringing up Frank and Bessy as the grandchildren of an earl. Attributing her husband's follies to the force of early example, she had placed her son at an obscure private school, and limited the accomplishments of her daughter to reading and writing; and, with the garrulity of a feeble mind, was never weary of expatiating in their presence upon her own misfortunes and the misconduct of their father. But no sooner did little Frank become conscious of the decencies and distinctions of life, than he was equally indignant at his mother's harsh allusions to the frailty of his deceased parent, and Lady Mary Woodbridge's taunts concerning the importunities of poor relations.

Dearly as he loved his sister Bessy, it was a relief to escape from the severities of his joy-

less home to companionship of his own age, although at school he was a prey to the mortifications showered by masters and ushers upon children whose parents are suspected to be in adversity. At a public school, indeed, young Grenfell's talents and high courage would have raised him to the level of his companions: placed as he was, his spirit and abilities proved an inconvenience, and served only to produce breaches of routine and subordination. But, just as he was on the point of being pronounced a rebel beyond hope of corrigibility, Francis was summoned home to attend the funeral of his mother, and to learn that Lady Mary Woodbridge had condescended to accept the guardianship of her nephew and niece.

For the present, the young people were to be received on a visit at Hursley Park; but a commission was already entrusted to the family man of business concerning poor F[redacted]'s establishment in life, which cut him to the soul. Mrs. Grenfell, fancying that because

her brother had realized a fortune of twenty thousand a year in commercial life, her son and his four thousand pounds had only to enter a city firm to secure the same golden prosperity, had long decided that Frank should enter a counting-house on attaining his seventeenth year; and Lady Mary saw no cause for reversing the decree. It was only young Grenfell himself who, proud of his superior talents and illustrious descent, recoiled from the notion of such a career. With so small a capital, to what could he aspire? What must be his prospects, what his hopes?—that miserable moral extinction conveyed by the contact of inferior society, and an existence at once anxious and obscure!

Such was the state of the boy's feelings on removing from his cold, dull, unincidental home in the suburbs of London, to the brilliant magnificence of Hursley Park. Every thing was now around him that the heart of boy could desire,—horses, dogs, guns, pistols,

boating, archery, angling, shooting, hunting; and these luxurious accessories of happiness were the property of a youth of his own age,—his own nearest kinsman! His future career of ignominious drudgery looked gloomier than ever by comparison; and there was evident danger that the heart thus sorely tempted might become meanly envious, or meanly parasitical to his prosperous cousin.

The high tone of young Grenfell's character preserved him from either failing. Untamed by the lessons of society, his self-confidence rendered him in idea the equal of Sir Henry; who, prepared by the probation of a public school to live on terms of equality with lads of his own age, liked him all the better for his frank good-fellowship. It was in vain that Lady Mary, who regarded her son as on a par with the Prince of Wales and Dauphin of France, attempted to reduce the reckless Frank to the cringing position of a poor relation. Grenfell was already as much at

home at Hursley Park as his cousin; and it was Sir Henry's pleasure that they should be as brothers.

Frank possessed over the young Baronet not only the advantage boasted by the Maréchale d'Ancre over her royal mistress,—"the spell exercised by a strong mind over a weak one,"—but the superiority of birth. He was better informed than the Eton boy, and he was grandson to an earl! Sir Henry remained true to the foible of the Woodbridges; already he estimated rank far above money. In the course of his schoolboy squabbles, his father's city origin, and the newness of his title, had been more than once flung in his teeth. On boasting of his mother Lady Mary, and his uncle the Marquis of Clangarvan, he was reminded by antagonists, who had right honourable mothers and marquis uncles of their own, that a man's position in the world is determined by his paternal descent; and, with due deference to young Grenfell's pa-

rentage, not only agreed with him that a clerkship in Mincing Lane was *infra dig.* the blood of all the Grenfells, but insisted that his cousin should accompany him to Oxford for the benefit of a classical education.

"Frank Grenfell should not become a quill-driver: if his cousin liked the army or the bar, he would assist him with his purse; if the church or the diplomatic line, with his interest. He would take care of his cousin."

"You don't know what you undertake, my dear Harry," pleaded Lady Mary, who had detested her sister-in-law, and regarded Frank and Bessy Grenfell as vexatious incumbrances. "To say nothing of the three or four hundred a year this whim will cost you during your cousin's stay at Oxford, consider what false notions you will be instilling into the mind of a young man whose whole fortune consists in four thousand pounds."

"Has he no more? Poor fellow! The greater need to give him a college education,"

replied Sir Henry, to whom his mother's opposition always acted as a stimulus. "Oxford is twice as necessary for Frank as for me."

"My dear boy! consider the distinguished position you are to occupy in society!"

"With Grenfell's abilities, he may attain what position he pleases."

"May and must, my love, are very different things."

"In one word, mother," interrupted young Woodbridge, "either Frank accompanies me to college, or my friend Jack Hartwell may take up his quarters in Maudlin by himself. I consider Frank an honour to the family."

"Yes, there is a considerable family likeness between you," said Lady Mary, viewing her son with complacency.

"In the first place, he is a deuced clever fellow."

"Yes, in those vulgar private schools they certainly do pick up a smattering of everything," added her ladyship.

"And, in the second place, he is deucedly well connected. Frank's father was the son of Lord Waterton, one of the oldest earls in England."

"Yes, and by his misconduct so irritated his lordship, that he was discarded by the whole family."

"That was no more Frank's fault than yours or mine."

"It was his misfortune, my dear; and in this world people are often punished for their misfortunes," replied *le philosophe sans le savoir.*

"I shall make an exception to the rule by trying to console Frank Grenfell for his," said Sir Henry, rendered trebly obstinate by his mother's obstinacy; while Lady Mary, driven from point to point, was obliged at last to take refuge in a protestation against the unfairness of tasking Mr. Hartwell's hands with a second pupil.

"You are well aware," said she, "that it

was far from his wish to undertake the task of tutor even to yourself; we have no right to burthen his hands with our poor relations."

"We must try and reconcile him to the additional trouble by an increase of salary," answered her son. But Hartwell, on being consulted, would not hear of such a thing. He was pleased with Frank, gratified at the idea of having him under his charge; and eventually succeeded in persuading the foolish fussy Lady Mary that her son would benefit by the emulation in study resulting from such companionship. Under the impression that Frank was to fill the part of the whipping-boy who shared with King Jamie the instructions of the renowned Buchanan, her ladyship accordingly deigned to sanction his matriculation at Oxford.

But, while tolerating her nephew in deference to the whims of her son, to her niece she soon became personally attached. During the absence of the young men at Oxford, Miss Gren-

fell proved an invaluable companion,—a supplemental memory, a patient writer of notes, an intelligent carrier of messages. She had all the readiness of a *demoiselle de compagnie*, with the good-breeding and self-respect of a gentlewoman; and a favourite waiting-maid and favourite lap-dog were soon superseded in the affections of her aunt.

Many people thought it strange that Lady Mary, in her annual visits to town, afforded her ward no advantage of governesses or masters; and one or two intermeddling dowagers of her card-playing coterie suggested that, if a little polished-up with accomplishments previous to coming out, Miss Grenfell might perhaps form a suitable connexion. But to these hints Lady Mary replied in mysterious whispers "that she knew what she was about; that Bessy was a good, quiet, useful creature, whose means were small and expectations moderate."

In reply to which the dowagers murmured among themselves, "Knows what she is about!

Yes; and we know what she is about. Bessy is growing up a fine handsome girl, and Lady Mary takes care that she shall learn neither music, drawing, nor dancing, lest she should attract the attention of her cousin."

CHAPTER III.

As rivers which run the slowest have always the most mud in their channel, so a solid stiffness in the slow course of a man's life is a sign of a thick bed of mud at the bottom of his brain. SAVILLE.

LIGHT were the hearts of the three young men as Sir Henry Woodbridge's chaise and four crossed Maudlin Bridge for the last time on their return to Hursley Park. Hartwell rejoiced in the somewhat unclerical prospect of exchanging folios for game-books, and Oxford hacks for his favourite hunters; while Woodbridge, on the eve of the attainment of his majority, was full of boyish projects and manly consequence.

It was only Francis Grenfell whose con-

templations were of a less exulting nature; thoughtless and blameable as had been his college career, the sole branch of learning in which he had attained any proficiency at Oxford was knowledge of the world. He now understood the importance assigned to wealth in the category of social valuations; he saw clearly that he was the inferior of his cousin by twenty thousand a year, and that he could not remain an inmate of Hursley Park without becoming the hanger-on of Sir Henry.

To retain the independence so dear to him, he must work. It was painful enough that his sister should remain for a time the slave of the domineering Lady Mary: but his exertions might hereafter enable him to emancipate her from the yoke, and afford her a home under his roof; and he held it a sacred duty to devote himself to this definite purpose. Frank had already declined Sir Henry's offers of advancement in the church. He knew that he had even less vocation than

Jack Hartwell for parsonic life, and scorned to render the house of God a seat for the money-changers. The bar was his mark. He had been complimented by the principal of his college with prophecies of brilliant success as an orator; and already chambers were engaged for him in Lincoln's Inn, with a view to "studying the law!"

But, alas! his teeth chattered at the sound. Pleasant, but wrong, had been Frank Grenfell's college career; and bitterly did he now reproach himself with opportunities neglected or abused. Hunting parties and convivial meetings had engrossed three of the most valuable years of his life. At that epoch drunkenness was the vice in vogue; and, from Carlton House down to Sir Henry Woodbridge's Oxford lodgings, claret the order of the day and night. Without the smallest propensity for hard living, Grenfell followed the multitude in the footsteps of the Prince of Wales; and being exposed to greater temptation than

his cousin by his vivacity and talent for enhancing the convivial hour, Hartwell, albeit unused to the reproving mood, was sometimes obliged to interpose a serious harangue in favour of morning lectures and early chapel.

By all this wanton folly Frank had deadened his faculties, injured his reputation, and impaired his scanty fortune. His college debts amounted to nearly one of his four thousand pounds; and, though Woodbridge's first act on coming of age was to take the payment upon himself, Frank felt himself unpardonable in having incurred this unnecessary obligation. To his own two hundred a year, meanwhile, his sister was permitted by Lady Mary to add one half of her income; and the three hundred thus secured to him for present subsistence Sir Henry insisted upon making up into five. Nay, it was his earnest request that the principal of the sum might be conveyed to Grenfell in a deed of gift, rather than doled forth as an allowance to the

son of his father's sister. But Lady Mary (by the advice of her lawyers) suggested that the amount of young Grenfell's college debts proved his unfitness to be entrusted with the care of his own destinies; while her son, recalling to mind the number of her ladyship's indigent nephews and nieces, felt that it might not be altogether safe to establish a precedent for the demands of his maternal relations.

The noble impulses of twenty-one were accordingly checked and hardened, in order to lay the foundations of future egotism; while Frank Grenfell, still a pensioner, was not even apprized of his cousin's honourable intentions. He was grateful for all that had been effected for him; but grateful with a boyish, unappreciating gratitude. Sir Henry was only doing for him what, had their positions been reversed, he would have done for Sir Henry. Experience of this close-fisted world had not taught him that, in their bene-

factions to each other, people are intent upon doing as little as they can, rather than as much as they may; and that nine Sir Henry Woodbridges in ten would have consigned him, with his pen behind his ear, to a counting-house in Mincing Lane.

It was not till settled in his solitary chambers, at a distance from his sister and his friends, that he had leisure to deliberate properly upon these things; and the result of his cogitations was, that, to progress into the distinguished lawyer and politician "his fancy painted him," he must begin with burning the midnight oil and his common-place book; that to become a man of wit and fashion about town before he was called to the bar, would be fatal to his projects of industry; and that five hundred a year, though more than enough for his needs, was not enough for his follies.

At Hursley, meanwhile, young Grenfell was sadly missed. Sir Henry's indolence and indifference left the house a blank in the cata-

logue of the amusements of the neighbourhood; and it was only during his cousin's visits that the Hursley dinner parties ceased to be regarded as a bore. Lord and Lady Raynham, Sir William Beckford, and the family at Danston Grange, were unanimous in their admiration of his animated countenance, his pleasant manners, his originality and sprightliness; and even Bessy seemed entitled to higher regard and courtesy as his sister.

Lady Mary saw nothing of all this. Wrapt up in pleasing illusions of self-consequence, she fancied it was out of deference to herself that the Raynhams, Beckfords, and Crewes were so civil to her nephew and niece.

Lady Mary Woodbridge was a weak illiterate woman, so far justified in her worship of high birth, that a mere title, unillustrated by youth, beauty, or merit, had raised her to the enjoyment of twenty thousand a year; and so far justified in her worship of wealth, that her twenty thousand a year now secured her pro-

digious consideration in the county. It included political influence, it included church preferments; and many, therefore, were the respectable knees bowed down to the golden image which Sir Gideon the banker-baronet had set up.

Her ladyship, meanwhile, resembled the vain poet, who, resting himself upon a bench under a shrine of the Virgin, took for his own share the genuflections and humble salutations of the passers-by. The attention with which her long rambling stories were listened to by divers shovel-hats in the neighbourhood seemed a tribute to her own eloquence rather than to the vacant living of Marrowfat; and on the eve of an election, when candidates to whom senates had already listened with applause sat in silent attention to her empty rhodomontades, she fancied they were booking her arguments instead of the plumpers of the Hursley interest.

All this was now to end. Though, by Sir

Gideon's will, she had a life-right in Hursley Park, it placed a barren sceptre in her hand. She was entitled to reside there, but not to uproot a rose-bush or untile a dairy. At present, indeed, she was scarcely conscious of the limitation of her powers. There had been no dispute to bring the exact terms of the will under consideration, and Sir Henry was too indolent in all matters but those of sportsmanship to make it probable he would be hasty in the assumption of his authority.

Her ladyship, therefore, was still as consequential as ever. As if instinctively aware of the insignificance of her understanding, she strove to enhance the importance of her sayings and doings by a most mysterious carriage; by leading people aside into corners to communicate in a whisper the most ordinary events, and emphasizing the common-place of her letters by lines double, treble, quadruple, scored under the most unmeaning words. "Of" became elevated to distinction by five scratches

of her pen, till it looked like a above the fifth line; and the humblest particle was scored into grandiloquence. It was impossible to "monster her nothings" more laboriously than Lady Mary Woodbridge did.

This foible was well understood both in her family and the neighbourhood, and the value of her words rendered into local currency previous to quotation. Just as the courtiers of Louis XV, when playing in public, used to dazzle the eyes of the multitude by appearing to stake a thousand louis-d'ors instead of the solitary coin really adventured upon the game, her ladyship's expressions had a nominal and a *bonâ-fide* value. Though Miss Grenfell was at first startled by Lady Mary's mysterious instructions to her to "take care that Benton brought in tea precisely at nine o'clock," or her earnest mode of entreating her to "put on thick shoes, for that the shrubberies were tremendously damp," she now comprehended that these charges be-

came important in the mouth of Lady Mary only because she had nothing of greater moment to say.

Her ladyship's brother, the Marquis of Clangarvan, was a man of the same propensity. Having a wider sphere of action at command, it was into the ears of ministers that he whispered his emphatic nothings; and to public bodies, or stewards of political meetings, that he wrote his italicized nonsense. His lordship was a great man for returning thanks where his gratitude was uncalled for, and for signifying his approbation where it had never been canvassed. Many people supposed it was to free himself from the Marquis's officious counsels, by affording occupation to his importunate leisure, that Pitt had secured him permission to levy a regiment on his Scottish estates; the Premier being perhaps of opinion that his lordship would do less mischief by dictating to the adjutant, drill-serjeants, and drum-majors of "that noble and singularly

soldierlike body of men," than by interfering with his own important avocations.

It was an amusing spectacle when Lord Clangarvan came down to visit his sister at Hursley Park, and the two Lilliputian Talleyrands met upon their stilts to deliberate upon the affairs of Europe and the family. They were to be seen every morning from the house stalking in close consultation through the shrubberies, to be secure from eavesdroppers, as Catherine and Potemkin may have wandered through the groves of the Hermitage, or like Solomon and the Queen of Sheba taking counsel in some web of Flemish tapestry. Yet these confidential mysteries seldom regarded more than "an embrocation for the rheumatism, which Farquhar could not professionally recommend; but which (*as a* FRIEND) he ventured to mention *in strictest confidence* as having been tried with GREAT success by the *favourite* waiting-maid of the Countess of Dunderhead."

Since Sir Henry's attainment of his majority, however, the brother and sister had found graver matters to discuss; and, strange to tell, because they were grave, his lordship and her ladyship assumed in discussing them a rational tone. Lady Mary, anxious to secure an heir to Hursley Park, wanted to consult her brother concerning a marriage for her son: the Marquis, anxious to secure to the Minister the political influence (in repayment of which the Minister had promised to secure to his lordship, no matter what—on that head he said nothing,) wanted to consult his sister concerning the best mode of extorting a promise from his nephew.

"Leave it to me,—no one has any influence with Woodbridge but myself," replied Lady Mary.

"Leave it to me,—I have already a match for him in my eye," answered Lord Clangarvan.

Yet neither of them had at present the slightest notion of the disposition of the young

Baronet. Sir Henry, like most indolent people, passed for easy to manage; he was in fact of a most obstinate temper. He took his resolutions and formed his opinions strongly, as if to apologize to himself for never taking the trouble of changing them. In many people, this sort of inamobility passes for firmness: in the good-humoured, listless Sir Henry, it passed unobserved. Lady Mary often boasted in some remote corner, and a mysterious whisper, that she could wind him round her little finger; while in truth, having a tolerably just appreciation of his mother's judgment, it sufficed for her ladyship to recommend a measure, for her son to set it down in his list of unfeasibilities.

The only individual who possessed any real ascendancy over his mind was his cousin Frank, and precisely because young Grenfell never attempted to influence his conduct. An instinctive sense of honour warned Frank Grenfell from the first, that his position with regard to his cousin was precisely such as to

interdict all interference in his affairs. "Ask Hartwell,— consult Hartwell!" was his invariable answer, at Oxford, when Woodbridge referred himself to his counsels; and the tutor of the two young men was usually the person whom both cousins selected as their guide and umpire. Not that they entertained any vast deference for his abilities; but Hartwell advised them kindly, and maintained, both in college and in the country, the character of a man of spirit. It is useless to expect of boys of twenty a preternatural discretion. "A good fellow,"—"a gentlemanly man,"—is more likely to win upon their confidence than all the philosophers of the ancient or modern world.

But Oxford days were over now. Sir Henry, who was fully aware that Jack Hartwell, though versed in the Oxonian code of honour and glory, was as inexperienced as himself in the ways of the world, grieved sorely over his cousin's departure for Lon-

don. Not that Grenfell was not a whit more versed than himself in the usages of society, but he had so much tact; Frank could deal so pleasantly and wittily with a dilemma which his cousin was too idle to unravel; Frank was so delightful a companion, so bright and sparkling an exchange for the prosy inanity of his mother's family, Sir Henry could scarcely console himself for the loss of his favourite cousin.

Still, he felt that Grenfell had decided wisely. While blessing his stars that it was not to him the task was appointed of carving his way to professional distinction, Sir Henry admitted that, with his cousin's abilities and limited fortunes, the sauntering life of Hursley Park was a fatal indulgence. To lounge about with pointers and keepers from August till Christmas, and from Christmas till April breathe the hurried breath of the fox-hunter, were enjoyments too exquisite to be luxuriated in without

danger at less than an income of ten thousand a year.

In the midst of his regrets at the loss of Frank, Jack Hartwell was also taken from him. "The bishop was beginning to kick up a dust about his non-residence at Hardington." The bishop, having discovered that his duties at Oxford were at an end, had expressed a desire to see the Reverend John Hartwell in his vicarage at his next visitation, in place of the curate, who now officiated for that and the three circumjacent parishes; and the Reverend John, grateful that his vicarage lay in a hunting county, prepared to comply.

"I shan't have a soul to speak to when you are gone," said Sir Henry despondingly. "My mother seems bent upon my passing the first year of my majority with her at Hursley; and, so long as the shooting season lasts, it is scarcely worth while to cross her."

"The partridge shooting at Hursley is

better than anything out of Norfolk," replied Hartwell in a consoling manner.

"Very likely; but then this cursed neighbourhood gets duller and duller every year. Just look what people we have got round us: the Raynhams think of nothing but politics; the Danston Grange people, of nothing but their estate; the Beckfords, of nothing but music; the Crewes, of nothing but themselves: — I have made it a point not to enter one of their houses since I came from Oxford."

"So it appears, or you would not be so confoundedly at the bottom of the basket," cried Hartwell, laughing heartily at the dolorous face of Woodbridge: "I have dined once with each of them, and can assure you that the Raynhams have the best London society (political I grant you, but still the best,) constantly staying at their house. The Danstons are doing a thousand things at the Grange which it would amuse you to watch

in progress; and if the Beckfords think of nothing but music, you will find that they have thought to some purpose during our absence, for they are the best amateur performers I ever heard."

"Perhaps so; but my mother bores me so amazingly about our country neighbours, that I have made up my mind not to cross the threshold of any one of them. I almost wish I could take up some definite pursuit. I have a great mind to send to town for a good lathe; but I suppose I should soon get tired of turning. Do you recollect how amazingly Wynter of Brazennose used to amuse himself with his easel? I would turn my thoughts at once to oil-painting, only it would be a bore having a master staying three or four months in the house. I really wish, my dear Hartwell, that I could take a fancy to something or other to occupy my leisure."

"Supposing you try a course of reading? I have often attempted to persuade you of the

necessity of brushing up a little before you enter into public life. Now, a course of sound English reading"—

"My dear fellow, I go to sleep every day as it is, before the cloth is off the table."

"You take such violent exercise."

"Yes, for want of better amusement."

"No great compliment to Lady Mary, or your cousin."

"My mother does not shine as a companion. Lady Mary repeats the same stories day after day; and fancies that, because they never wear out, my patience is to last as long."

"But Miss Grenfell."

"Bessy's silence is almost as overpowering as her ladyship's narratives. My mother swears that my cousin is the cleverest creature in the world; and I should believe it, perhaps, if my mother had not sworn it so often. But it is scarcely possible to believe that Bessy is Grenfell's sister,—the coldest, the most uncompanionable person,—just fit to write my mo-

ther's notes and sweeten her tea, and nothing else on earth. One might forgive her for not being pretty; but at eighteen there is really no excuse for being so deuced heavy and disagreeable."

CHAPTER IV.

> Greatness of mind and nobleness, their seat
> Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
> About her, as a guard angelic placed!
>
> MILTON.

FROM these uncourteous allusions to his cousin, it is clear that Lady Mary Woodbridge was justified in her assertions that her son incurred no risk from living under the same roof with Miss Grenfell.

"Fall in love with his cousin!" cried she, on being taxed by Lord Clangarvan with having provided the indolent young Baronet with a wife. "I can assure you that, of all women living, Bessy is least likely to attract him. Henry detests dark beauties."

"Miss Grenfell is dark, without being a beauty. But, between ourselves, it is rare for young gentlemen of Woodbridge's age to detest women of any complexion."

"He likes only lively people; and Bessy is as grave as a judge."

"Take my word for it, the prospect of winning such a prize as Hursley Park would soon brighten her up."

"As Hursley Park, my dear brother?—it is an idea that could never by any possibility enter her head. On her instalment here, I made her perfectly understand that it was my intention for Henry to form a very distinguished match. On the other hand, Bessy does not even render her cousin justice. She may be in some degree jealous (it would be very natural, poor thing!) of my overweening affection for him; but certain it is, that my niece was happier and more cheerful before Henry came to take up his quarters at Hursley."

And so far Lady Mary was correct. Sir Henry's arrival proved an obstacle to many of Miss Grenfell's pleasures. She could no longer feel herself perfectly at home in the house; no longer range from the pleasure-grounds to the old library, and from the library through the deserted state-rooms, with a perfect security of having the flowers, books, and pictures to herself. She was always encountering Sir Henry, or dreading to encounter him; always fearing that he might think it necessary to invite her to ride or walk, lest she should miss the companionship of her brother,—hating her, and muttering against her all the time, as young men are apt to hate and mutter against young ladies forced upon their attention. Against this the high spirit of Bessy rebelled. She knew that she was neither handsome enough nor "distinguished" enough to merit the courtesies of Lady Mary's darling son; and was too proud

to be indebted for them to either pity or compulsion.

Her heart was in fact unbiassed by personal predilection; no charm of youthful association bound her to her cousin. She had attained her sixteenth year before she even beheld him; and, from that time till the present, his *nonchalance* had shown to peculiar disadvantage in contrast with the cordial animation of her brother. She had seen very little of the world; had, consequently, little skill in the discrimination of character; and would have considered it presumptuous and ungrateful to analyze the merits of the aunt and cousin who were so kind to Francis and herself. Lady Mary, though sometimes *exigeante*, good-natured enough to those who had no right to oppose her wishes, interfered with her niece no further than by monopolizing the greater portion of her time. She was allowed to devote the remainder to her own pursuits.

Reading and writing constituted Bessy's sole employment. No harm, Lady Mary said, could come of reading and writing; and the companionless girl of eighteen had accordingly the command of four hours a day, and the fine old library of Hursley Park.

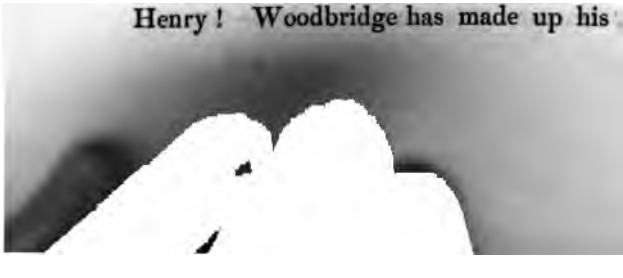
Frank Grenfell, during his few months' sojourn at Hursley after quitting Oxford, was amazed at the extent and variousness of his sister's studies. Though, from his unclassical schooling and desultory habits, he had picked up twice as much knowledge as the run of public-school boys, who are drilled through a double file of classical authorities without being permitted to turn their eyes to the right or left, he was astonished to find that, wherever his mind had sojourned, Bessy's had been beforehand with him, and that there was scarcely a subject on which she was not qualified to converse. For a moment Frank recoiled, with a young man's antipathy, from the idea of his sister turning out

a *femme savante;* but having fortunately retained the axiom that "there is no offence in blue stockings provided the petticoats are long enough to hide them," and observed that in company Bessy was too shy and silent to afford any suspicion of her mental resources, he rejoiced that, doomed to live with a foolish old woman like her aunt, and a knot of stupid country neighbours, his sister had provided for herself in the old library a host of invaluable acquaintances, with whom she could live, and move, and have her being. People boast of frequenting the best circles; Bessy Grenfell lived in the best circle of authors. Contented, serene, reflective, her world was a happier one than the troubled vortex of society. It was life without its struggles, without its labours; the life of a more spiritualized mortality.

Upon this tranquil mode of existence the arrival of Sir Henry was an intrusion. Sir Henry brought noise and confusion,—the ne-

cessity of entertaining the neighbourhood,—the necessity of changing the servants, who had too long slumbered under the dowager rule of Lady Mary. Nor, in exchange for her lost quietude, did she derive any advantage from his company; she would as soon have conversed with one of the gamekeepers: Sir Henry was a person who never opened a book; his pleasures were as much matter of fact, as Bessy's matter of the mind.

But this was not the worst. Previous to Frank's departure for London, he had thought it necessary to breathe a word of warning in his sister's ear (a modified edition of the counsels of Laertes to Ophelia); entreating her to avoid all familiarity with her cousin, as likely to provoke the jealousy of Lady Mary. Frank had too much delicacy to advert to the real dangers of the case; he did not choose to say to his pure-minded and high-minded sister, "Beware of attaching yourself to Sir Henry! Woodbridge has made up his mind



against matrimony, and his mother has made up hers to marry him to a woman of rank." He merely insisted on reserve and distance in her manners towards her cousin.

Had Grenfell hinted the real bent of his apprehensions, Bessy would have received the intimation with a hearty laugh; so impossible did it appear to her for any rational being to become attached to a man who spent half his time in sporting, and the other half in yawning or dozing on the sofa,—a newspaper the utmost stretch of his intellectual exertions. But, as Grenfell's interdiction regarded only deportment, she received his counsels with becoming gravity.

She now saw how irksome it would be to live in the house with a person with whom she must never be alone,—never familiar. All the happy hours she had enjoyed in the old library must henceforward be passed in her own room. It was not enough that she was to lose the society of Frank; but the lessons

he bequeathed her were to render her existence at Hursley a life of penance.

Bessy Grenfell, was, however, the only young lady in that part of the country who looked upon the arrival of Sir Henry as an annoyance. For some years past, the neighbouring families had borne with the twaddledom of Lady Mary, in expectation of the different order of things to be introduced at Hursley on the young Baronet's coming of age,— "He was a good-looking young fellow, and Eton and Oxford could not have failed to supply all else that was wanting as an appendage to twenty thousand a year. He would settle on his estate; give dinners, balls, cricket-matches, marry perhaps one of their own daughters or nieces, but, if not, some charming young creature worthy to adorn their county balls with her diamond necklace; a welcome exchange for the fussy folly of old Lady Mary!"

At that period, war had sealed up the avenues of the Continent; all the world was at

home, and too many a home restricted within that magic circle of chalk which reduces fowls and human beings to torpor. There was nothing stirring save King's messengers; nothing in progress but train-bands and militia. A comparison of those days of stagnation and care with our present times of movement and joy, leaves the balance singularly in favour of our happier epoch.

In every house throughout England politics were the daily theme for disputation. But there was an especial plea for waging the war of Whig and Tory in the neighbourhood of Hursley. Raynham Lodge was a place that the party in power delighted to honour. During the recess, Ministers were in the habit of eating their venison, routing their foes, and slaying their slain under its roof.

The recent deaths of Pitt and Fox had given birth, like the decease of Alexander the Great, to a thousand factions and petty ambitions; and yet politics seemed to have fallen

with the lost leaders in public estimation, as we have since found the popularity of poetry expire with Byron, and of prose fiction with Sir Walter.

Among the pretendants to the mantle of Elijah was Lord Raynham,— a self-created Solon, a Tory-created peer: not only recently ennobled, but recently emerged from the trading class, his lordship was already one of the fiercest champions of the privileges of the aristocracy. On his door might have been inscribed (as was chalked by Canning, in a convivial moment, on the door of another *parvenu* lord who was fond of parading over his dignities,)

> "Bobby Raynham lives here,
> George the Third made him a peer,
> And took the pen from behind his ear."

Evidence of the newness of the honours of Raynham Lodge was apparent in the self-sufficiency of the owners. Lord Raynham's elevation to the peerage arose, as was plain to

perceive, from his having united himself with the ugly first cousin of the late Minister. Yet, in the eyes of his country neighbours, he assumed a sort of oracular dignity, implying that every one was not fit to be trusted with the degree to which he was indispensable to the service of government. He was always assuring Sir William Beckford and Mr. Danston that it was quite a mistake to suppose him in correspondence with Perceval, which they had never supposed; and if he ran up to London for a day to go to the dentist, or see a new farce, he took care to visit Downing Street with an invitation to Raynham Lodge, or some other equally trivial purpose, in hopes of having it figure next day in the ministerial journals, and be thence transcribed into his county paper, that "Yesterday, Lord Raynham had an audience of the First Lord of the Treasury."

Like many other people, he betrayed his sense of his insignificance by the pains he took to

render himself important. Almost every one has a secret purpose in life,— Lord Raynham's was to appear a man in power. He knew his incompetency too well, to grasp at the substance; the shadow was sufficient for his ambition: provided his kinsfolk, neighbours, tenants, servants, fancied that half the business of the nation was transacted at Raynham Lodge, he was content. The clerk of the parish, clerk of the peace, and other duodecimo dignitaries of the neighbouring town, continually enlarged, at their Saturday club, upon the obduracy of my lord in not choosing to enter the cabinet, though the Premier had been so long holding the door open, and waiting to bow his lordship in; nay, many of even the county clergy and provincial placemen were in the habit of waiting upon Lord Raynham with their grievances, in the belief that a petition presented or a request proffered by him could not fail to prosper in the high quarters, where his voice was so influential.

Most parties in power possess a sort of "dead man" member of this description, like the binding of gilt calf to a valuable volume, or the ornamental frame of a noble picture, having no more real connection with it, than a cockle-shell floating upon the Thames or Danube with the destinies of those mighty streams. Such men are not dangerous, they assist in maintaining the superficial structure of a party. Those who are divided among themselves in the council-chamber may dip together in the dish at such men's banquets without committing themselves; and waverers, who are not yet tied together by the bonds of red tape in the for-better-for-worse union of the ritual of the Red-book, meet at their country-houses as on neutral ground. Their explanations to parliament, being ex-ministerial, are implicitly relied on by the country; and a Premier is as pleased to possess a Lord Raynham who provides him with agreeable entertainments during the recess, and gratuit-

ous prose during the session, as a Lord Raynham to meet with a Premier whose notice stamps his moral insignificance into value in the estimation of this unjudgmatical world.

As Lord Raynham was as little worth listening to as her ladyship worth looking at, even the excellence of the shooting and the merits of the cook at Raynham Lodge might, however, have failed to attract, year after year, the distinguished holiday-party essential to their dignity, and consequently to their happiness, but for the charm imparted to the society by the attractions of three beautiful nieces of Lord Raynham, who were frequent residents in the house. The Miss Lovedens were handsome, portionless, expensive girls, whom no one ventured to marry till it was discovered that they were cards to be played as well as women to be admired; when lo! a clever young lawyer of the Tory party became, by a *coup d'état*, the husband of the eldest sister, a Welsh Judge, and the honourable member

for Fleechem! The Dean of Monmouth, who soon afterwards espoused the second, had been formerly the chaplain of Lord Raynham; and, thus auspiciously wedded, Lady Rowe and Mrs. Swinburn still brightened with their charms and talents the vacation parties at Raynham Lodge.

Julia Loveden, the youngest and prettiest of the nieces, was still unmarried; and upon her had Lady Mary Woodbridge set her heart to become the wife of Sir Henry. There were obstacles: the young lady was five years older than young Woodbridge, and was known to have refused divers advantageous proposals. Still, if she could be moved to turn her blue eyes favouringly on Hursley Park, there was little doubt that the new Baronet might sooner or later figure as a newer Baron.

Lady Mary felt that she should have lived long enough when entitled to die the mother of a Lord Hursley!

CHAPTER V.

Fine music, like the pillory, may be said
To nail our ears down and expose our head.
YOUNG.

"WELL, my dear Harry! All is settled,—all is settled!" cried Lady Mary, toddling one morning towards her son, who was engaged in looking over the plates of Daniell's "Rural Sports." "I wish you joy, my love! We shall have a charming party!"

"What—here?" demanded young Woodbridge, pursuing his employment undisturbed.

"Lord, no! my dear!—Didn't you know that Lady Raynham had been with me in the drawing-room."

"Perfectly," he replied, without feeling it necessary to add that such was his motive for choosing to sit in the library.

"Well, we were settling a day for going to Raynham Lodge; and I 've chosen the 16th, my dear, on account of the moon."

"I dare say the moon is very much obliged to you."

"Lady Raynham wanted us to sleep there; but I hate sleeping out of my own bed, and thought you would prefer coming home at night."

"I should prefer staying at home to going to Raynham. But, luckily, I am engaged on the 16th."

"Engaged?"

"To the Beckfords."

"Quite impossible, my dear boy! This party at Raynham has been in the wind these ten days past."

"The reason, perhaps, that the weather has been so cursedly disagreeable! You should

have warned me sooner; I engaged myself only yesterday to Sir William."

"At least, why not warn me last night?"

"You were not invited. It is a bachelor party at Oak Hill,—a friend or two to dine and sleep."

"Then you may easily get off; such engagements mean nothing."

"They usually mean to be very pleasant. I shall have the pleasure of informing you whether this one fulfils its intentions," replied Sir Henry, with his eyes fixed on the proportions of Daniell's "Old English setter."

"Artful, intriguing people!" ejaculated Lady Mary, crimsoning with rage at this announcement.

"Who?—the Raynhams? I fancy they are rather sharp!" replied her son.

"I mean the Beckfords!—Asking you to dine and sleep at Oak Hill in that sort of way!"

"In what sort of way, then, was I asked to dine and sleep at Raynham Lodge?"

"In a respectable manner,—with your family! The Beckfords are much too knowing to invite me and my niece."

"Is it a proof of folly, then, to ask you and Miss Grenfell to dinner?"

"It would have been a proof of their honourable views. Henry, I warn you in time; the Beckfords have three daughters to marry!"

"And you, one son, who, strange to tell, claims the use of his own eyes and understanding, and does not scruple to assert that the Miss Beckfords are the prettiest girls in our part of the county."

"Very well, Harry, very well!" cried Lady Mary in a violent rage, "I see you are bent upon bringing on one of my nervous attacks; but allow me to warn you, once for all, that Sir William Beckford is up to his ears in mortgages!"

"So he told me the other day. That last election, which the Raynham interest so unhandsomely contested with him, cost him thirteen thousand pounds!"

"Is it a reason, pray, for you to marry one of the Miss Beckfords, that their father chose to throw away their fortunes on the hustings?"

"God forbid! For so utterly do I detest all the jobbery called politics, that even to hear the names of Whig and Tory twice mentioned in a house suffices to drive me out of it! Tell Lord Raynham so, with my compliments."

"Good heavens, Bessy!" cried Lady Mary, as Miss Grenfell at that moment put her head into the room, and was about to retire on seeing it already occupied; "would you believe that Sir Henry is engaged on the 16th? We must send an excuse to the Raynhams, after all."

"Must his engagement prevent our going?"

inquired Bessy, wholly indifferent on the subject, but concluding that her aunt was disappointed at missing the party. "Surely after promising Lady Raynham"—

"Why, what signifies our going, without your cousin? You know very well that it was only on his account the party was made up."

"Was it?" said Miss Grenfell with an air of stupid perplexity.

"Why, didn't you hear Lady Raynham say that Miss Loveden was coming over with the Dean and Mrs. Swinburn?"

"Indeed! I am very glad of it," replied Bessy, still unenlightened; "Raynham is always twice as pleasant when Julia Loveden is with her aunt."

"There!" cried Lady Mary, addressing her son; "you see everybody confirms what I told you, that Miss Loveden is the most charming girl in the county."

"I don't remember your telling me so;

and I only hear Miss Grenfell observe that Raynham Park is not quite so tiresome with her as without her," said Sir Henry,—a smile overspreading his handsome but inexpressive features at the simplicity with which Lady Mary, who fancied herself so shrewd a strategist, threw open her game. "But, at all events, I have three to one in my favour at Oak Hill; three pleasant Miss Beckfords instead of one charming Miss Loveden."

"The Beckfords are all lively and good-humoured," said Bessy, "and very popular in the neighbourhood." An interference which provoked from Lady Mary a request that Miss Grenfell would fetch her a pocket-handkerchief from her dressing-room; and, as Bessy entered the room on her return, it seemed as if her cousin had been defending her during her absence, though not in the most complimentary manner.

"What signifies whether she gave her opi-

nion, asked or unasked?" met the ear of the young lady; "as if her judgment was likely to influence me one way or the other."

Miss Grenfell was not mortified; she was glad to find Sir Henry so ably seconding her brother's desire that they should remain on distant terms. As to his dislike of a visit to Raynham Park, she did not wonder at it. The conversation there was so exclusively political, that not a house in the neighbourhood did she so willingly avoid; not "political" according to the wide notions she had imbibed from the best classical authorities of English history, but in the petty sense to which hangers-on of parties prostitute the word.

Lady Raynham was a woman born and bred among debates and divisions. She knew the composition of each successive parliament as accurately as the Speaker; nay, could calculate immediately before a general election, not only the amount of the majority, but deter-

mine, without being much at fault, the result of the poll-books in all the burghs and counties of the empire! On such occasions, her ladyship emitted volumes of sums total and fractional with a correctness worthy of the American calculating boy! To those of her own sex, meanwhile, she had not a syllable to say; and, except when her husband's nieces (the ladies of the ambitious Dean and rising Welsh Judge) were present, both of whom had as much interest as herself in the business of "taking stock" in the party shop, invariably indulged in a gentle doze during the time her female guests were sipping coffee and talking *chiffons* in the drawing-room after dinner.

That this adamantine woman should condescend to plot for anything so insignificant as the marriage of a Miss Loveden with a Sir Henry Woodbridge, did not enter the surmises of Bessy; who, with unaffected candour, believed her ladyship to be enthralled in ques-

tions of national interest,—slave trade and free trade,—Catholics and corn,—peace or war. Nor could Lady Mary's denunciations arouse her niece's indignation against even the rival manœuvres of the Beckfords.

"I am quite sure," was her reiterated reply to the lamentations of her aunt, "that neither of the Beckford girls would marry a man not fond of music; and, luckily, my cousin does not know one note from another."

"Before he has been four and twenty hours in the house, they will persuade him that he has a fine voice, which only requires instruction."

"I suspect he will not trouble himself to learn," replied Miss Grenfell.

"Trouble! they will take care to make it a pleasure! It will fully answer their purpose to have him taking a part out of tune in their detestable trios and glees; and, before we know a word of the matter, Harry will be falsetto'd

into a match, and we shall have the whole Beckford family squalling away at Hursley Park."

Miss Grenfell smiled. "Surely you are in great haste to make them quit Oak Hill," said she. "I should think my cousin might shoot a few of Sir William Beckford's pheasants without incurring quite so much danger!"

She flattered herself that the question was now at rest. But Lady Mary, having nothing else to do, loved to get up a pet vexation, which she whined over with her friends, and squabbled over with her antagonists, by way of adding a little excitement to her uneventful day. She had not capacity to appreciate the exceeding luxury of having her whole time at her disposal in the midst of so many accessories to human enjoyments.

Unfortunately, (and it is by no means a rare peculiarity,) Lady Mary was apt to fancy that the remarks she made to other people were made to herself by them. Her ideas were of

so vague and volatile a nature that she did not trouble herself to ascertain whence they were derived; and, being in the habit of hourly entertaining her niece with dissertations upon the cunning and meanness of the Beckfords, not only took it into her head, but asserted to her son, that Bessy Grenfell declared the three Miss Beckfords to be the most superficial, false, and frivolous of their sex! Sir Henry was disgusted. Remembering his cousin's declaration in their favour, he accused her of double-facedness, besides resenting the impertinence of her interference in his affairs.

One day, after receiving from Lady Mary an assurance that "Bessy was furious against his incivility to the Raynhams, and certain that he was about to throw himself away on Selina Beckford," he went so far as to add a postscript to the letter he had been writing to Frank, entreating his interference with his sister not to trouble herself with his engagements; but, after keeping the letter three

days in his desk, he flung it into the fire, apprehensive that Grenfell might fancy he was profiting by his position to dictate to either. Sir Henry was not, however, the less irate against Bessy. He seldom addressed her, unless it was absolutely necessary, and always in a tone of coldness or defiance; her hasty mode of retiring whenever she encountered him alone in the library or pleasure-grounds having convinced him that she was employed by Lady Mary as a spy upon his actions.

Such was the state of Sir Henry's feelings when he went to fulfil his engagements to the Beckfords. Oak Hill was a pleasant sunshiny place, and the Beckfords agreeable popular people. Their fortune, their estate, their position, were such as to place them at ease with themselves and society, without bringing them into competition with the great county families, and consequently exciting the envy of the little ones. All went well with them till, one unlucky day, the demon of electioneering,

sallying forth from the domain of Raynham Park, took possession of the brain of Sir William Beckford, which, to own the truth, stood empty at the moment. A neighbouring clergyman, with whom Lord Raynham had a tithe suit, had taken occasion to assure poor Beckford that he would undertake for a few hundred pounds to bring him in for Swansborough on the Liberal interest; and the result had placed the unfortunate Baronet in parliament for fourteen months, in debt to the amount of thirteen thousand pounds, and in hot water for the remainder of his days with his neighbours at Raynham Park.

It was to be regretted that the good-humoured mediocrity of Sir William should be so heavily visited; for he was an amiable man in his domestic relations, and in the worst of his mortifications took care that the penalty of his folly should fall as little as possible on those who had no share in the offence. He did his utmost not to interrupt the hospitalities

of his house, or the pleasures of his wife and children. His daughters still enjoyed their three months in London every spring; and no sacrifices were demanded of his only son, a gay young captain of Hussars, and rarely a visitant at Oak Hill.

Selina, Mary, and Sylvia Beckford were very slight variations of the same tune. The shades of difference perceptible in the colour of their hair, eyes, and complexions, distinguished them as little from each other as difference of temper or character. They were all three rather pretty, rather tall, very good-natured, very lively, and a great addition to the dull society of the neighbourhood of Swansborough.

But, above all, they were passionately fond of music. From their childhood Lady Beckford had insisted upon their being inordinate performers; and the boss which (pointed out by phrenological science) had induced her to cultivate their musical talents, was supposed to have ably seconded her intentions. By dint

of practising four or five hours a day, under the *surveillance* of a governess selected exclusively for her musical proficiency, they became what is called mistresses of the harp, piano, and guitar; that is, they played about as well as sixth-rate professors, and well enough to weary to death most people who were in the habit of dining with Sir William Beckford. That they could do little beside, follows as a matter of course; their time and thoughts were devoted to a single object.

As they grew to woman's estate, a new duty presented itself to the mind of Lady Beckford. They must sing as well as play; no matter whether they had voices. To her daily inquiry of the governess, "How went on the practising yesterday?" was henceforward to be added, "I trust neither of the girls has neglected her solfeggio?"

Luckily for her maternal solicitude, all three became tolerable proficients. Sylvia, the youngest, had a fine soprano voice; Mary, the

second, a contr'alto; and Selina, a rambling, powerless, available organ, that could take any part when better performers were not at hand; and with Lady Beckford's accompaniment a trio was thus provided. Vocal music is always more popular than instrumental; it is, perhaps, more grateful to the ear: and whereas, though the number of players is limited, most fancy they can sing, or at least indulge in humming a popular tune, there is more sympathy with the attempt. The three Miss Beckfords, therefore, increased immensely in popularity on the discovery of their vocal accomplishments. They spent one winter at Brighton, and were torn to pieces by rival dowagers anxious to amuse their company at no expense; were invited in London to take part in concerts and pleasure in water-parties, and finally considered an acquisition to the most fastidious visiting-book.

Meanwhile, being good-humoured, unaffected girls, who played and sang because they

liked music, and had been taught nothing else, they did not grow fine, or raise difficulties upon the strength of their new consequence; and, though they returned to Oak Hill, still the three Miss Beckfords returned to be as sociable as ever with their country neighbours.

Nevertheless, an evil had resulted from the monomania of the family. The habit of having a sort of permanent concert-room established at their house in Cumberland Place sanctioned the introduction of many objectionable persons to their society. Lady Beckford, as a woman of character and conduct, was studiously correct in her circle of acquaintance; would not have visited a *divorcée* for the world, and made it a rule to bow coldly to such married ladies as appeared in the Park carrying on flirtations at both windows of their carriage at the same time. But French or Italian singers, of whose morals she knew worse than nothing, were allowed to be the familiar companions of her daughters; and provided a man could accom-

pany divinely on the flute, or a woman assist in the more difficult concerted pieces of Mozart or Cherubini, (Rossini being still below the horizon,) they were warmly welcomed to the house of Sir William Beckford.

In London this plenary indulgence attracted little notice; those persons daily frequenting the Beckfords' society, being as music-mad as themselves, regarded harmony as a mantle covering a multitude of sins; while the less familiar friends, admitted only to their occasional concerts, conceived that the Signori and Signore, warbling or fiddling for their entertainment, were on the same terms in Lady Beckford's house as at the Opera or Ancient Concert. They did not approach the piano near enough to perceive that Signora Rosalvina Sostenuta called the Miss Beckfords by their Christian names, or that they were in the habit of shaking hands with the greasy-haired mustachio'd adventurers who belong in Italy to the lowest

rank, and, having received the education, retain the habits and connections of *laquais de place.*

On the close of the second season, things proceeded to extremer extremities. Lady Beckford, having fallen into ill-health, was growing weary of her task as leader of the family orchestra; and the girls, accustomed to be accompanied by their mother, were completely thrown out,—their trios and quartettos silenced, their duets dumb. What was to become of them?—no song, no supper! They feared that the society of the Miss Beckfords without their music would be as little cared for as a fiddle without its strings!

A remedy was at length suggested,—it is impossible to say "suggested itself," for the hint was expressly given by their particular friend, Signor Quevirini, a leader of renown. One of his pupils, a young Italian of great promise, who had appeared with success at many professional concerts of the season, was invited

to Oak Hill for the autumnal months, the period of Sir William's annual hospitalities, to receive no remuneration, ("Signor di Radicati was a gentleman in his own country, and would be offended at any pecuniary offer,") but to reside with the family on terms of acquaintanceship.

The Beckfords were enchanted: Radicati was the steadiest accompanier in London; had a perfect knowledge of counterpoint, and a charming bass voice. What more could they require? As he was good-looking and gentlemanlike, and the project made no encroachments on his purse, Sir William readily coincided. Radicati had been singing gratis at his house all the season, and was ready to entertain his company all the autumn. Having never addressed more than a bow to the head of the family, the head of the family voted him quiet and inoffensive; and a low-bred adventurer, who happened to have a "*bel organe*" and a fine ear, was accordingly introduced into the

bosom of a well-conditioned family, to sit at table and interchange courtesies with the first families of a highly respectable neighbourhood.

One or two of these, old Sir Robert Crewe and Mr. Danston, were highly disconcerted; for in those primeval days, "when George the Third was King," this system, so common in the present day, was an innovation. They went so far as to vote "that d——d Italian fellow of Lady Beckford's a nuisance!" He had sometimes the audacity to linger with the squires and the claret after the ladies had quitted the table. Of what could they converse with him? Sporting or politics were not in the department of a professional fiddler; and the few words of English he was able to jabber were about as intelligible to them as their few words of French or Italian to himself. The Beckfords were considered to have done themselves and the neighbourhood real injury by the introduction of Signor Radicati and his black whiskers at Oak Hill!

These abominations were, of course, duly enlarged upon by Lady Mary to her son; and had it been the Raynhams who exposed themselves, and annoyed the country, by keeping a pet *contra-basso* in their household, he might have seen objections. As it was, he pronounced that Sir William Beckford had as much right to quarrel with old Timon, the St. Bernard dog, which it was his pleasure to introduce into his own dining-room, as he to set up his back against Signor Radicati. He knew little of the Beckford girls. During his holidays and vacations they used to be shut up practising with the governess, and for the last two years had been in London whenever he visited Hursley Park. All he had hitherto remarked was in their favour; it would be time enough to find fault when he discovered fault to be found.

The "friend or two" invited to dine and shoot in company with him at Oak Hill were the old General, Sir Robert Crewe,

and one of the young Danstons of Danston Grange. Sir Robert was invited because he was one of those men who through life contrive to be invited everywhere; to Chatsworth, because he had been met at Donnington; to Carlton House, because he had figured at Lord North's. Sir Robert, having seen a great deal of the world, had a great deal to say about it. He had seen a great deal of service too, if medals and ribbons were to be credited; but, next to dentists and secretaries of state, medals and ribbons are known to be the greatest humbugs in civilised society.

Meanwhile Sir Robert Crewe knew everybody, and everybody knew him. He was a very invitable man, with a respectable gray head, a member of Brooks's, and on the list of royal aid-de-camps. If he sometimes said a thing he would have been sorry to swear to, he seldom said one unaccompanied by an oath; that is, an oath within the bounds of de-

cency,—"by Jove, sir!"—"by George, sir!"—"upon my soul and honour, sir!"—just to afford to his flimsy discourse the energy of asseveration indispensable to the hundred and thrice told campaigning stories of a major-general. Sir Robert tenanted a small place in the neighbourhood of Swansborough; and was all the more welcome to the hospitalities around him, that Lady Crewe, who was a snuffy old oddity many years the General's senior, never ventured beyond the limits of their grounds.

"Well, my dear boy! how goes it?" was his greeting to young Woodbridge on his arrival; for Sir Robert affected a sort of fatherly familiarity with the rising generation. "I am looking for my friend Beckford. Have you seen Sir William? Not returned from riding, eh? Then I must take you into the morning-room to the young ladies. Yes, by George, sir! you must come into the morning-room. I just left them trying a new

English glee which I brought over in my pocket. Upon my soul and honour, sir! they sang it at sight as well as the Knyvetts.—Lady Beckford, my dear ma'am, here is Sir Henry Woodbridge! My dears, I have brought you Sir Henry Woodbridge! Now, pray, go on with your charming music; don't let us be any interruption. Upon my soul and honour, we shall run away if we are the least interruption!" cried the old General, who was an interruption wherever he went; and the Beckford girls were accordingly obliged to rise and be civil to Woodbridge, whom they heartily wished back again at Hursley.

Sir Robert next forcibly introduced his companion to "his talented friend, Monsieur Rattycardy;" a presentation which the Beckfords left uninflicted, not out of respect to the Baronet, but because their dear Radicati would be thrown away on a young gentleman who rejoiced in no music save that of the hunting-

horn. After having broken up the comfort of the party by ten minutes' intrusion, Sir Robert was the first to propose that they should depart, and proceed once more in search of his friend Beckford.

The Italian singer shrugged his shoulders on Woodbridge's exit from the room. "*Quel ours!*" said he with pitying air and accents, without recollecting that the graceful bow and entrance, on which he prided himself in contrast with that of the English boor, had been taught him as part of his professional accomplishments.

"Sir Henry Woodbridge is shy and awkward," said Mary Beckford good naturedly; "but he is very much liked among young men: *d'ailleurs il a un beau château dans le pays, avec cinq cens mille francs de rentes!*"

"*Ah! c'est différent!*" replied Radicati with an involuntary bow. Mary and her sisters did not inquire from what Sir Henry's property differed—perhaps from that of Tom

Danston, who was staying at Oak Hill,—a younger son, whose manners were as indifferent as his fortunes, and who delighted in waging a war of practical jokes against "Signor Squallini."

CHAPTER VI.

Ask Mrs. Meddle, who is a confidant or spy upon all the passions in town, and she will tell you that love is a game at cross-purposes. It was a mistake in the ancients to paint Cupid as a blind boy; he is in fact a little squinting thief, who looks two ways at once.

SIR RICHARD STEELE.

DURING the two days of her son's absence from home, Lady Mary nursed up her indignation into what she intended to be a fit of sullenness on his return; but, the moment Sir Henry reappeared, maternal fondness prevailed. The mere sight of her good-looking, well-grown son, caused the clouds to disperse; and female curiosity to learn how he had been passing his time at Oak Hill effected the rest. It was almost sunshine

with her ladyship when she commenced the conversation by inquiring when the Beckfords thought of removing to Brighton for the winter.

"They intend remaining in Hampshire. If you wish to know why, you can ask Lady Beckford; they are coming to dine and sleep at Hursley on Wednesday week."

With all her natural volubility, her ladyship was struck dumb by this intelligence. Such an inroad upon her prerogative out-passed her wildest imaginings. The claim of residence accorded her by the will of the late Sir Gideon was one of mere toleration: her son was master because owner of the place; but that he would interfere with her privileges, least of all on a point so intimately connected with her prejudices, had never occurred to her.

For a moment she was half tempted to resist; but, luckily, there came to her recollection certain counsels she had recently received from Lord Clangarvan: "If you make the young

man's home disagreeable to him, he will attach himself elsewhere," was his uncle's suggestion. Assuming, therefore, an air of patient pursy resignation, she replied, that "she should have the honour of receiving Sir William Beckford and his family." It was not for some minutes afterwards that a touch of feminine spleen instigated her to inquire whether the singing-master was included in the invitation.

"Certainly. I invited the whole party. I was even obliged to include that eternal old bore, Sir Robert Crewe, who managed to loiter in the room while the engagement was discussed. I wish you, my dear mother, to ask the Danstons to meet them."

Lady Mary sat swelling. Sir Henry had never suggested so many domestic measures since he came to man's estate; and it was curious that the mother, who had been unable to devise a sufficient variety of indulgences for him while a boy, began to think only of check-

ing his desires from the moment he became entitled to have a will of his own.

"I will send over the groom with a card to Danston Grange," she replied with highly-wrought complacency. But the worst provocation was to come.

"I should be much obliged to you to write, or get Miss Grenfell to write, by to-day's post, to Broadwood," resumed Sir Henry, "and desire him to send down the best-toned grand piano he has by him. The case signifies little, for I do not wish to go beyond a hundred and fifty guineas. You can explain about the conveyance, and all that sort of thing. But pray beg him to be punctual, for the Beckfords would be distracted by that horrible old kettle of Tompkinson's in the saloon, which is at least thirty years old, and always out of tune."

Having now adventured the unkindest cut of all, Sir Henry thought it prudent to "wonder whether there were any letters for him in his room," and make a hasty retreat. To Miss

Grenfell, whom he encountered in the hall, he deigned only a cold good-morning; and when, some minutes afterwards, Bessy found Lady Mary still paralysed in her chair, the old lady had scarcely strength to falter forth, "Dreadful news, my dear! Harry is going to be married to one of the Beckfords."

But for the care with which her ladyship saw fit to emphasize the single number, Miss Grenfell might have conjectured, from the consternation of her aunt's countenance, that Sir Henry thought of espousing all three at once!

"To which of them?" she replied; "to Mary, I hope,—she is so very mild and amiable."

"Good Lord! I do believe you are pleased with the news!" whined Lady Mary.

"You have been always wishing that my cousin might marry early," pleaded Bessy.

"But not into such a family as that!"

"Are not the Beckfords respectable people?"

"How can you be so tiresome! What good

can Harry derive from their respectability?— It was my object that he should marry for connection. Think what an opening, if he had chosen to propose to Julia Loveden!"

"I thought the Lovedens were the daughters of a country clergyman?"

"But their mother was Lord Raynham's only sister; and see how the Raynham interest has pushed them in the world! The three sons with sinecures, and receiverships, and all sorts of things; and even the sons-in-law loaded with government patronage!"

"Surely Sir Henry stands in no need of a sinecure! What could he derive from government patronage?"

"He might — but no matter!" cried Lady Mary, checking herself on reflecting that Bessy was neither old nor cautious enough to be intrusted with her secret. "However, it may not be too late to marry her yet."

"Not if he is going to be married to one of the Beckfords?"

"But it is not certain that he is going to be married to one of the Beckfords."

"I thought you said"—

"Never mind what I said. Sit down, my dear, and write a dinner-card to the Danstons for Wednesday se'nnight, — six o'clock: and then I have a long letter to dictate to you upon important business."

"Business?" reiterated Miss Grenfell, looking alarmed.

"Yes, my dear; Harry wants one of Broadwood's best grand pianos for the Miss Beckfords."

"As a present?" inquired Bessy, mechanically taking up the pen.

"Lord, no! For the saloon! How stupid you are to-day, my dear!"

"I am glad of that," said Bessy, reverting to the purchase of the piano; "for now I shall hear them in perfection. The music-room at Oak Hill is too low; and Lady Beckford

often says that the Hursley saloon is the very thing for music."

"Yes,—as a hint, when she wanted her daughters to be asked to sing! Well, she will have enough, and we shall have more than enough of their singing now!"

"Nothing is easier than to have too much of music," observed Bessy carelessly; "but now and then it is a relief in society where people are not on a sufficiently intimate footing for conversation."

The next time Lady Mary had occasion to talk of the Beckfords to her son, she of course, informed him that Miss Grenfell was of opinion the Beckfords were very judicious in strumming from morning till night, as they had not a word of conversation; and Sir Henry, accusing his cousin of the mean jealousy of an envious mind, replied bitterly, "that some people of his acquaintance, though equally destitute of conversational powers,

could not even strum to make up for the deficiency!" He almost regretted not having despatched his letter of complaint to his cousin Francis; but he found some difficulty in making up his mind to inflict pain upon Frank.

Unconscious, meanwhile, of the fruition of his hopes, that no intimacy might arise between his gay cousin and grave sister, young Grenfell had chained himself manfully to the oar, and was studying for life and death and a barrister's gown. It is true there was at present no great temptation to allure him from his Coke-upon-Lyttleton. London was still empty; still abandoned to apple-stalls and the galley-slaves of the learned professions; and, as the few young men of his acquaintance now in town were not only neophytes therein, but studious as himself, the utmost recreation they allowed themselves was the sight of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons illustrating together the plays of Shakspeare

as they were never before or since illustrated. It was amazing what sapient resolutions he had taken and registered against himself. Frank's early hours, — his temperance, — his frugality, — were to be exemplary. In his solitary chambers he often communed with himself over the destinies of his hapless father, who, young, handsome, high-born, and accomplished, had run unchecked the career of vice and folly, till, without a shilling in the world, and with creditors about as many as he had originally possessed shillings, he united himself with a woman of mean origin, ten years older than himself, to secure the means and appliances of further frailty.

Avoided by his friends, disowned by his family, hunted by his creditors, William Grenfell had perished in the prime of manhood within the walls of the King's Bench; nor were these disgraceful facts concealed by his widow from the after-knowledge of his children. But though she had harshly done her

utmost to degrade the memory of the offender in the eyes of his son, and though Frank retained no personal recollection of his father, the natural instincts of human nature inspired him with sympathy for his sufferings, and the natural sense of an intelligent mind with resolution to avoid the follies leading to so sad an end. Conscious of high capacity, he knew that it depended upon his exertions to secure independence for himself and his sister. From their paternal relations Frank Grenfell had never received or looked for countenance. His father was the son of a former Earl of Waterton by a second marriage; and, at the period of William Grenfell's ruin, the Earl, his half-brother, more than twenty years older than himself, seemed to rejoice in the opportunity of revenging upon the Benjamin of his father's old age certain injuries received in his childhood from his mother-in-law. Lord Waterton had been among the first to fling a stone at the spendthrift

when compelled to patch his fallen fortunes by marriage with a city heiress; had neither honoured his memory with a mourning suit, nor his widow and orphans with an inquiry.

But this hard-hearted relative had speedily followed the thoughtless William to the grave. The present Earl of Waterton was his only son, and himself the father of sons advancing towards manhood, having arrived at Eton about the period when Francis was entered at Oxford.

"I suppose I shall meet these people in the world," sighed Frank to himself one day, when, a new edition of Debrett having fallen into his hands, he noticed that the mention of his father in the Waterton peerage amounted only to—"4. Hon. William Aston; born May 7, 1754; married June 4, 1784, Elizabeth, only daughter of Job Woodbridge, Esq. of Lombard-street, deceased, by whom he had issue;" while the marriages and offspring of the two successive Earls were enu-

merated with singular exactness. "And I shall take care to meet them as strangers: some day or other, perhaps, my name may fill a prominent place in this volume. How many of these peerages are mere *noblesses de robe!* and why not a Lord Grenfell as well as a Lord Mansfield, Thurlow, Eldon, or Ellenborough? In such a case I should be proud to provoke an acquaintance with these 'kin *so* less than kind.' I should delight to encounter them as equals, owing my distinction to my own industry. In England, God be thanked, the avenues to eminence are open to all. The first spiritual and the first temporal lord of the next reign may at this moment be working his way in the grammar-school of some country town; and surely I, with so many advantages of birth and education, have a right to look forward among the rest? Let but the day of triumph arrive, and my first care will be to prove to my Lord Wa-

terton how little his neglected kinsman stood in need of his countenance!"

Such resolutions, and the application to which they gave birth, lasted well through the winter. Frank had his alarum fixed at the head of his bed, his reading-lamp, his coffee-biggin, his green tea, his everything that young students adopt in the plenitude of their good intentions. To hear the chimes at midnight became a rare indulgence with him. He rose with the London sparrows to read, he trudged through the London mud to his master's office in Boswell Court, he returned through the London fog from his assiduous attendance at Westminster Hall; he worked himself off his legs and out of his patience. By the time his Oxford friends began to reassemble at Long's and Stevens's at the close of the sporting season, he had arrived at the point of reviling the drudgery of his profession; and, scarcely even recollecting the ennoblement of Lords Thurlow or

Eldon, had an intimate acquaintance with the woes of all the briefless barristers hanging threadbare upon the outskirts of the inns of court. Such cheerless thoughts required of course to be drowned in claret, when discussed with some Ch. Ch. chum. Frank was assured by his gay associates that he was deucedly altered, and that the state of his health required him to keep a horse. With five hundred a-year for present needs, the interest of the Woodbridges, and heirship-apparent to Hursley Park in perspective, it was clearly unnecessary for him to wear himself out by premature application to business.

His friend Tom Hounslow introduced him to his aunt, the Duchess of Huntley; his friend Lord Marytown introduced him to his mother, the Countess of Derbyshire. Handsome, agreeable, endowed with a *beau nom*, Frank was invited and reinvited. Nothing was easier than to accept, nothing easier than to luxuriate in splendid dinner-parties and

brilliant balls, because he fancied that nothing would be easier than to redouble the industry which was to repair the idleness of dissipation.

But, in those times, dissipation was really a dissipated thing. A dinner-party implied excess; a ball lasted till seven in the morning, the desperate interlude of supper implying a renewal of excess. People told good stories and sang good songs between their bottles of claret, and ate broiled bones and devilled anchovies between their good stories and good songs. For half the young men about town, life was a drinking-bout without an end, or a steeple-chase without a goal. They rode as if they were drunk, and drank as if they were mad.

Such modes of life were well enough for those who had nothing to do but kill themselves in the speediest and most noisy manner: but for such as, like Frank Grenfell, had an existence to conquer; like Sheridan, a renown to cherish; or, like the Prince, a nation to

govern, the career was fatal. Seldom sober enough to reflect, never prepared to act, they shuffled on from folly to folly, leaving a bitter reckoning-day to sum up the wantonness of their waste of life.

Francis Grenfell, meanwhile, was sufficiently conscious of his folly to become remiss in his correspondence with his sister. On visiting Hursley at Christmas, he had met her with open arms and open heart, having nothing but records of his prudence to unfold in return for Bessy's lively sketches of the battles between Lady Mary and her son in favour of the rival factions of Raynhams and Beckfords. The deportment of Miss Grenfell and Sir Henry announced that small partiality existed between them; and having learned from the latter that his object in frequenting Oak Hill was simply to pass away his time in the intervals of sporting, and that, so far from meditating matrimony, he intended to spend a jovial bachelor season in town, Francis was able to listen

with gravity to Lady Mary's confidential communications concerning her son,—"that poor Harry had been taken in to engage himself secretly to one of the Beckfords; the father and mother, she had no doubt, were to decide which; while that unfortunate girl, Miss Loveden, the beauty of the county, was pining away for him in hopeless attachment."

Satisfied that his sister's peace of mind was likely to escape untouched amid these family jars, he quitted Hursley without anxiety at the close of the vacation; and so soon afterwards commenced his wanderings from his former blameless track, that he had scarcely resumed the happiness of confidential communication with his sister.

For Bessy, though two years his junior, Frank entertained almost as much respect as affection. The utmost sobriety of good sense combined with her feminine delicacy of feeling. From infancy she had been an eye-witness of poverty and sorrow. During her brother's

absence at school, her task had been to soothe the peevishness of an infirm and discontented mother; nay, during Mrs. Grenfell's latter years, young as the daughter was, she had been compelled to assume the management of the little household.

On her removal to Hursley Park, these sad impressions, modified by study and reflection, had perfected the grave serenity of her character. She had no desire to hazard herself among the pomps and pleasures of the world; no desire to confront her father's arrogant family. All her ambition was centred in Frank; provided her brother's happiness and prosperity were secured, she was content.

It was impossible to admit to such a sister that he was passing his time, like Prince Harry, "with three or four loggerheads, among three or four score of hogsheads."

CHAPTER VII.

Prepare yourself for the great world as the athletæ used to do for their exercises. Apply oil to your mind and manners, to give them the necessary suppleness and flexibility. Strength alone will not suffice.

CHESTERFIELD.

LADY Mary Woodbridge seldom visited London till after Easter; and as the neighbourhood of Swansborough afforded what in Hampshire was called fox-hunting, (but what in Leicestershire might have passed under a less glorious name,) Sir Henry, glad of even so poor a resource against himself, consented to remain at Hursley till April.

The Easter recess was the triumph of Raynham Lodge. Five-and-forty miles was a charm-

ing distance from town for Ministers to eat their spring chickens and forced strawberries, and to be beyond reach of hourly expresses horsed by the idle caprices of royalty. Five hours took them to town when real business was to be done; but they were secure from the interruptions awaiting them at the five minutes' distance of Putney or Roehampton.

Hitherto, Lady Mary Woodbridge, like the rest of their country neighbours, had been excluded from these august privy councils. Her electioneering services did not entitle her to do more than eat her venison once a year in presence of his Majesty's Ministers: and to have had her wearisome false emphasis interposing a whole day long in the discourse of reasonable beings, was too great a sacrifice to policy. But times were altered; Sir Henry was sure of his election at the next dissolution; and it was accordingly arranged between the Raynhams and Lady Mary, that Lord Clangarvan should

visit Hursley Park *en garçon* during the recess, and accompany her ladyship, Miss Grenfell, and her son to pass a day at the Lodge. The little plot was so admirably got up, that it would have been impossible for Sir Henry to excuse himself without a direct breach of good breeding.

Sir Henry was in fact beginning to be entertained by the clumsy manœuvres of his mother to bring about a match between him and Miss Loveden. All Lady Mary's ecstasies, wherever they might commence, were sure to end with the fair Julia. Nobody could ride, dance, or converse like the lovely niece of Lord Raynham. Julia Loveden might marry anybody; Julia Loveden had refused everybody. It was clear that the Fates had reserved her for Hursley Park.

"My mother is always accusing the Beckfords of trying to entangle me in a match," observed young Woodbridge one day, when Lady Mary, bustling out of the room after an

harangue in favour of Julia and her charming sisters, left him alone with his cousin; "what would she say if they were to accuse her in return of trying to entangle Miss Loveden in a match with me? It is scarcely possible to cast the net more boldly than Lady Mary."

"They would at least acquit my aunt of interested motives," said Bessy, who had not the slightest suspicion of Lady Mary's views in the affair.

"She has no motive that I can guess, except to put me out of humour," he replied: "what is Miss Loveden to me, what am I to Miss Loveden?"

"You might be pleasant acquaintances to each other," replied Bessy, surprised at his unusual condescension; "for Julia is the most amusing creature in the world, and as much above plotting for your captivation as you may feel above being captivated. The other day, when we called at Raynham, I heard her quizzing my aunt without mercy for her

dreadful apprehensions of having you appropriated at Oak Hill."

Sir Henry's colour rose. Without intending it, Bessy had hit upon the mode likely to interest his curiosity concerning Miss Loveden. The young lady's satirical powers had been called forth then by his mother's absurd solicitude? How was he sure of not having been personally included in the jest? Sir Henry was morbidly susceptible to personal ridicule. He was vain neither of his fortune nor his position, it was impossible to be less tenacious of precedence or respect; but "he could not stand being quizzed." He was touchy to the last degree concerning the mode in which he was spoken of.

When about to take his place, therefore, the following day at Lord Raynham's dinner-table, he contrived by a dexterous manœuvre to offer his arm to his cousin; flattering himself that he thereby defeated the family stratagem. Miss Loveden was seated between his

uncle Clangarvan and one of the grand officials, whom his uncle Clangarvan was there to propitiate; and Sir Henry, who had been worried by Lady Mary into a detestation of Julia's very name, rejoiced at the idea of the tedious hour she was about to endure. As they were placed at table nearly opposite to each other, he almost exerted himself to entertain Miss Grenfell and Lady Hartingdale, who sat beside him, in order to pique the self-love of the scornful beauty.

Apparently the scornful beauty troubled her head very little concerning him, for her lively sallies throughout dinner-time kept Lord Hartingdale in peals of laughter, and Lady Hartingdale in a fit of nervous agitation; while Julia's coral lips and pearly teeth displayed themselves in a becoming smile. By degrees her vivacity communicated itself to the set immediately around her; and even those at a distance seemed inclined to keep up the ball by audible whispers of "Miss

Loveden says," or, "As Miss Loveden just remarked."

Sir Henry was determined not to listen. The mirth excited by her gaiety was offensive to him. He was sure there could be no genuine wit in what she was saying; nothing but flippancy and buffoonery being successful in mixed society. By degrees, however, he was struck by the brilliant animation of her countenance; he was forced to admit that he had never before beheld so lovely a creature. Still, it was beauty too beautiful,—too dazzling, too lustrous. Her countenance, like her conversation, wanted repose. It possessed the terrible brilliancy of a summer's day, "blasting with excess of light," and threatening a *coup de soleil* or a thunder-storm.

Meanwhile, Sir Henry gave his attention unembarrassed to the frothy conversation of Lady Hartingdale,—a Londonized woman of fashion, acknowledging the existence of no world beyond the pale of the coteries. But

in the midst of the gossip, scandal, and small talk, with which she was puzzling his brains as thoroughly as if using the jargon of judicial astrology, Miss Grenfell observed him suddenly stop short in his reply, while a deep crimson flushed his cheek. From that moment he never took his eyes off Julia Loveden; and his cousin decided that Love's bolt was shot, and the hopes of Lady Mary approaching towards consummation.

Little did she suspect that the occurrence by which his attention was thus suddenly arrested was nothing more than an almost invisible shrug of contempt, addressed by Julia to some person sitting on the same side of the table with himself, and referring, as he conjectured, to himself. He was instantly perplexed with curiosity to ascertain who was the lady's confederate, and what the motive of her scorn. "He was not conscious of having uttered anything supremely ridiculous. His taciturn disposition, he fancied, preserved

him from the utterance of the supremely ridiculous things uttered by other people. If Miss Loveden were on the watch for food for raillery, there were others at table more worthy of her sneers. She had only to give her attention a moment to her neighbour Lord Clangarvan; she had only to"— But it is unnecessary to pursue in all their intricate windings the reveries of a susceptible man.

When the party reassembled for tea in the drawing-room, Sir Henry was half disposed to engage the fair offender in conversation, in order to prove to her that his faculties were at least as lively as those of Lord Hartingdale, to whom she had been devoting herself; and for some minutes he stood contemplating her in silence, waiting for a favourable opportunity. But the shyness of a man unhabituated to general society prevailed; and after hearing his mother exclaim to Lady Raynham, "What a comfort to pass an evening in a house where rational conversation is

not interrupted by music!" and feeling that a little lively music would be a very agreeable break to the formality of the circle, he slunk towards a book-table in a corner, and, ensconcing himself apart from the company in a high-backed reading-chair, pretended to turn over an edition of Hogarth, as a screen to the preoccupation of his thoughts.

His person meanwhile was so thoroughly concealed, that, a few minutes afterwards, chairs were drawn towards the back of his *fauteuil*, and he experienced the good fortune proverbially said to belong to listeners.

"How could you be so ungracious to Sir Henry at dinner?" said a voice which he recognised as that of his cousin. "I was afraid he would see you quizzing every word of his conversation with Lady Hartingdale."

"Then why was he so stupid? He answered the poor woman (who, after all, prattled only of things familiar to all the world,) as

if he had been caught last week in the Sandwich Islands."

"Things are familiar to the London world, of which we know nothing at Hursley Park," replied Bessy. "Admit too, that Sir Henry is at least as well worth listening to as Lord Hartingdale, or the old Marquis."

"Likely enough! But people are not trying to marry me to Lord Hartingdale or Lord Clangarvan, who have appropriate moieties of their own. They are no more to me than the butler with his coffee-tray, or yonder arm-chair. The only reason I detest the awkward manners and heavy talk of your dear Sir Henry, is because my uncle and aunt, and half a dozen other people, have set their hearts upon my becoming Lady Woodbridge."

"Include me among the number," said Bessy affectionately. "I should like you exceedingly for a cousin."

"And I you, my dear; but not Sir Henry

for a husband. I never saw a less attractive person! not a quality to engage the eye, ear, or understanding!"

"He has many to engage the heart," replied Bessy mildly. "Sir Henry is much beloved by his dependants, and liked by his college friends. Mr. Hartwell really"—

"Mr. Hartwell is looking to his livings."

"But Frank—I am sure you will admit Frank to be disinterested; and my brother says that there is not a more honourable fellow on earth."

"Honourable!—just as he would recommend a footman for being sober and honest. Why, my dear Bessy, honour is the badge of all his tribe: he is obliged to be honourable; he would be kicked out of the Jockey Club, and have his spurs hacked off by the cleaver of the King's cook, if convicted of any lapse of integrity."

Sir Henry here drew a deep breath, by way of warning his fair neighbours of his

proximity. But Julia, who knew the reading-chair to be the favourite refuge of Lord Stringphrase's evening doze while visiting at Raynham Lodge, concluded that the right honourable Home Department was slumbering soundly within, and resumed her conversation.

"Besides," said she, "Mr. Grenfell is swayed by family prejudices as much as you are."

"By family obligations rather, Sir Henry having been a very generous friend to Frank: but no; if my brother did not entertain a high opinion of him, he would remain silent, not enlarge as he does upon his excellent qualities."

"Perhaps, my dear Bessy, Mr. Grenfell wishes to make him a brother-in-law, and tries to interest your feelings by all this praise."

"So far from it," replied Bessy without embarrassment, "that I am expressly interdicted by Frank from entering even into familiar

conversation with Sir Henry Woodbridge. My brother is aware of Lady Mary's desire to see her son form a brilliant connection, and it is not by us that her projects ought to be thwarted."

"Mr. Grenfell fancied then, that, but for his interference, you were likely to attach yourself to this honourable and entertaining young gentleman?"

"I rather think not!" replied Bessy with a slight laugh. "You have seen Sir Henry favour me with his company manners. At home, he treats me like a bear. Either he is jealous of Lady Mary's affection for me"—

"Jealous of that woman!" ejaculated Julia.

"Or considers me (which I am) a troublesome interloper at Hursley Park. Very few people, you know, have patience with their poor relations," added Bessy with a proud smile.

"And this you give as a proof of his honourable character!" cried Julia Loveden with

indignation. "If I had not thought him a poor creature before, you would teach me thoroughly to despise him."

"Then I am much to blame," cried Bessy with spirit, "for I know and think nothing but what is good of him; and, were I in his place, should probably consider Miss Grenfell a great nuisance in the house. All I ask of you, my dear Julia, is to take the trouble of making my cousin's acquaintance. Do not decide against him rashly. Does it suffice to make you prejudge him unfavourably, that all your mutual friends are bent upon seeing you happy together?"

"I never could be happy with such a man; and, what is more, he never would be happy with me. I have not patience with people so slow of apprehension. I should hit him sometimes too hard; after which, as I am too light-hearted and he too well-bred to quarrel, we should live together in the tame indifference of modern man and wife! No, no if; you are in

such haste, my dear, for a Lady Woodbridge, make a handsome present of him to the Beckfords, and let them draw lots for so prodigious a prize."

"I don't want one of the Beckfords; not (like my aunt) because Sir William's estate is incumbered, but because, though pleasant, good-humoured creatures, they are not wives for my cousin. They would become slaves to his caprices, drone contentedly down with him into a country gentleman's life, and cultivate all his weaknesses. Sir Henry should have a wife whose beauty and merits secure his attachment, but of whose temper and talents he stands a little in awe."

"Very pretty indeed! And you have actually selected me as the greatest tigress in the neighbourhood to become the Mrs. Sneak of your Jerry! Spare your trouble, my dear Bessy! Sir Henry Woodbridge has nothing to recommend him but his twenty thousand a year; and, had he twenty times that, I would

never be his wife. I have really no decent pretext for making an interested match. My father, instead of being the spendthrift lord created by novelists to compel his child into a 'hated alliance' by way of securing the payment of his debts, is (under your favour) a comely, comfortable, well-to-do country parson, with all his children provided for, and not so much as behindhand in his weekly bills. We must persuade Lady Mary, my dear Bessy, to let you come and visit us at Wandshill, and you will perceive that I have no excuse for marrying without affection."

"Without affection I would not have you marry even my cousin," replied Miss Grenfell; "but I am sure you would find him"—

"Look at my two sisters," cried Julia, with increasing animation: "Jane and Lucy have made what the world calls excellent matches. I should be wretched in the position of either. The Dean and Sir William Rowe look upon life as a job, as a place to get on in, as an ever-

drawing lottery, of which they worry themselves and their wives into fevers in praying for the prizes. I should"—

She paused. Lady Raynham, missing her niece from the circle, approached at that moment to inform her that Lord Hartingdale was waiting for a promised game at chess.

"Don't forget, my dear," whispered the prudent aunt as she drove Julia and her friend from their retreat, "to take the opportunity of saying a little word to him about the clerkship of the closet. I have promised the poor dear Dean that something shall be done on the subject in the course of the Hartingdales' visit here."

Miss Loveden smiled significantly to Bessy Grenfell as they proceeded together to the noisy group assembled round the ottoman in the centre of the room; nor was it for nearly a quarter of an hour afterwards that Sir Henry ventured to emerge from his retreat, and creep back into the circle. "Creep" was the befitting

word, for it was impossible to see a man more miserably crest-fallen. He, the proud, the tetchy Sir Henry Woodbridge, to be made the jest of a couple of insignificant girls; one of whom presumed to protest that twenty times twenty thousand a year would not bribe her to become his wife; while the other described him as a bear, and recommended him to the indulgence of her friend!

"They trouble themselves very unnecessarily on my account. It will be some time before I molest either of them with my attentions," said he with lofty indignation. But to Lady Mary's reproaches, as they returned together to Hursley, concerning his incivility to Miss Loveden, he refrained from answering a single syllable; while to the sole question hazarded by Bessy, "After all, you must allow that Julia is singularly beautiful?" he replied, "Beauty is not the only thing needful to render a woman attractive."

When Lady Mary made her appearance on

the morrow in the breakfast-room, she was informed that Sir Henry had started for town. A few lines were left to apprise his mother that he had business in London; that he intended to take up his quarters at an hotel; that he would wait upon her in Clifford-street on learning her arrival in town.

"I see how it is!" said the indignant Lady Mary, addressing Lord Clangarvan, who was busily stirring up his chocolate; "you drove him too home yesterday about his interest for Lord Raynham's candidate. Harry detests the very mention of everything relating to politics."

"I see how it is!" replied his lordship, wiping his unctuous lips; "you have plagued the poor lad out of his wits about marrying this miss, and not marrying t'other. He is gone to enjoy his liberty elsewhere."

Bessy Grenfell heaved a deep sigh, and looked heartily vexed.

"Is it not more likely," said she, "that my

cousin is gone to consult his lawyers about marriage-settlements? Sir Robert Crewe mentioned the other day publicly at Swansborough, that he had just learned at Oak Hill the engagement of Miss Sylvia Beckford to Sir Henry Woodbridge."

"Good Lord, Bessy! and you never mentioned it to me before," cried the horror-struck Lady Mary.

"I thought it unnecessary to alarm you on the mere gossip of such a chatterbox as Sir Robert Crewe."

"It is all over!" cried Lady Mary with an hysterical sob. "We will set off for London to-morrow: but I have no doubt that, before we arrive, the family diamonds will be resetting at Rundell and Bridge's, and the carriages ordered at Leader's. He, that might have had a peerage for asking for, if he had chosen to propose to Lord Raynham's niece!"

Lord Clangarvan looked blank, and began to beat the devil's tattoo: there were other

things beside the Hursley title likely to be lost to the family for ever, by his nephew's alliance with the Beckfords. Sir William would doubtless delude his son-in-law into pledging himself to the Liberal party; and his own pledges to the Treasury must be withdrawn without further loss of time.

CHAPTER VIII.

Rien qui sente plus le fermier qu'un jeune homme à la mode. On ferait une utile recrue de postillons et une belle lévée en masse de palefreniers, dans la classe des dandys.

RICARD.

WHILE dashing up to town on his hasty journey, Sir Henry's chief anticipation of pleasure in the metropolis consisted in the prospect of rejoining Francis Grenfell. A separation of two months rendered him more than ever conscious of the charm inherent in his cousin's lively society. With all other people he was on his guard; with Frank, it was perfect unreserve, unqualified confidence.

"I will not introduce a jarring theme be-

tween us," thought the young Baronet as his carriage rattled through the then unseemly gates of Hyde Park corner, "by complaining of Miss Grenfell's officiousness. Frank would feel it his duty to take his sister's part; and, after all, what signifies her impertinence? I shall take up my quarters in an hotel; and, no longer residing under the same roof, we need have nothing further to say to each other."

He was in fact bent upon rewarding himself, without loss of time, for the dulness of his six months' rustication at Hursley Park. More piqued than he cared to avow by the satires of the two young ladies upon his awkwardness, heaviness, and want of accomplishment, Sir Henry had already secretly abjured the constraint of female society.

"I suppose, if I chose to exert myself," mused he, "I could make myself as acceptable as Miss Loveden's favourite fops, and the rest of those hateful animals called lady's men. But no balls, no breakfasts, no London season

for me! Frank and I will manage to amuse ourselves as in our Oxford days, without the bore of dancing attendance upon a tribe of fantastic unmeaning misses."

The amusements enjoyed by young Woodbridge and his cousin, in their scrambling visits to town, consisted of course in hazard and claret,—in passing the morning at Tattersall's, and ending the night in the watch-house, with other excesses of grown-up schoolboys. But a single dinner with Grenfell at Nerot's Hotel, where Woodbridge now took up his quarters, convinced him that Frank's zest for barouche-driving, sparring, and skirmishing with the Charlies, had considerably diminished. Like Malvolio, he could talk of "nothing but ladies," nothing but balls. Before the evening was over, he insisted upon dragging off Sir Henry to the Italian Opera. "He had a ticket for the Duchess of Huntley's box, and had promised Lady Mary Russell to visit her for half an hour."

Perceiving the impossibility of detaining him, Sir Henry at length bade him go, with the addition of an apostrophe unnecessary to record; and exhausted by his journey, and the false spirits produced by the excitement of arriving in town after many months' seclusion, threw himself on the sofa and fell asleep. On waking at two o'clock in the morning in a dingy room, of which the fire was burnt out and the candles were burning low, Sir Henry, chilly and cheerless, missed the attendance and alacrity of Hursley Park. At home, his mother and Bessy would have roused him at a more seemly hour, or taken care to provide comfortably for his waking. Accustomed to be watched over and catered for, the ragged ungenial life of an hotel was not inviting to the spoiled child of fortune and affection.

Grenfell, with his usual candour, had already confessed to his cousin the relaxation of his application to business. He had made a clean breast of all his idleness and dissipation.

"What signifies a few months?" cried Woodbridge in reply. "You will soon make up for lost time. With your abilities you can do more in three months than other fellows in six; but the pleasures of one-and-twenty, if neglected at the right moment, are not, I suspect, so easily overtaken."

Thus encouraged in a career wherein he needed little encouragement, Frank consented to accompany his cousin to Tatt.'s on the morrow; Sir Henry's stud was to be made up, his outward man placed under the tutorage of Stulz and Hoby, his barouche and harness to be thought of. The duties on the hands of the two young men were multifarious. Satisfied to find himself once more in the welcome company of his cousin, Sir Henry suffered himself to be piloted from place to place, gratified rather than surprised at his cousin's universal popularity. Already Frank had obtained a name, an influence; was sought for and invited by women of fashion, and

courted and fawned upon by fashionable tradesmen. There was nothing in his social position to command the favour of the world. He was neither rich nor great, nor in the road to become so; his attraction consisted simply in good manners and good humour, combined into that wondrous charm—the art of pleasing!

It was a little mortifying, meanwhile, to Sir Henry, to find himself treated as a rustic, not by his cousin Frank, but by the foremen of tailors and hatters. The great man of the Acre referred himself to Grenfell, rather than to the *ignotus* by whom he was accompanied, concerning the picking out of wheels, and the colour of squabs: nor had Sir Henry the comfort of suspecting that, before he re-entered the yard or the show-room, the tables would be turned; that inquiry would assign to Hursley Park and its rent-roll a due ascendancy, endowing him with the privilege of being as humdrum and quizzical as he pleased.

At Tattersall's, however, even previous to the discovery of his real worth, his moral worth obtained a triumph! The supposed greenhorn espied and pointed out in a moment a blemish in the showy horse trotted out for his inspection, which escaped the less practised eye of the fashionable Mr. Grenfell; whereupon a wink went round that the green-one was a knowing-one; and Sir Henry, whose home-recreations on escaping twice a year from the Eton coercions of Dr. Rudiment had lain chiefly in the stable-yard, now reaped the rich reward of his proficiencies. Jem, the old ostler, swore "it was no use trying to gammon the gemman in the green coat and tops;" and the hat of Tatt. was respectfully raised as the country Baronet sauntered out of the yard. His susceptibility was somewhat appeased. On one spot of London ground his superiority was already established.

That day they dined together at the Clarendon, dined well and drank hard; and it was

at the close of their second bottle of claret that Sir Henry, who had been eyed askance as a quiz by the daily frequenters of the place, found himself vociferously hailed by Sir Robert Crewe, who, in those days of club-scarcity, had been dining in the coffee-room with a friend.

"Ha! my dear Sir Henry!" cried he, in the sonorous voice which topped all others wherever he went. "Give you my honour I had not the slightest idea you were in town. Is Lady Mary arrived? Still at Hursley Park, eh? By George, sir! there 's no standing the country just now. We are up for the season. The levee on Wednesday, you know; the Horse Guards, and all that sort of thing. You must dine with me some early day at my old quarters in Hinde-street. Ha! Mr. Grenfell, I beg your pardon; upon my soul and honour, my dear sir! I did not see you before. Escaped from 'the weighty business of the law,' as Clarinda says in the play? Don't let

me interrupt you both. I'll sit down with you a moment while you are finishing your claret."

And the result of his sitting down, and of the third bottle, which was the inevitable consequence, was that Frank contrived to slip away to an evening engagement, leaving Sir Henry in the grasp of old Crewe, writhing under the hundred and fourth edition of the expedition to the Helder, and the two hundred and fourth of the siege of Valenciennes. Woodbridge retired to bed that night even more weary of himself and London than on the night preceding. He was still a bubble floating on the stream; an atom unamalgamated with the brilliant mass arising in many shapes around him.

Both Sir Henry and his cousin, however, were at the age when every pleasure and every position in life appear easily attainable; when the world seems to lie at our disposal; when the events of life are apparent, but the means

by which they are brought about invisible. After another day or two in town, the consciousness that Frank was launched into a new element, leaving him bored and solitary in the old, induced Sir Henry to relent in favour of society. Frank was now the centre of many a brilliant circle; and to propose to him the readoption of their Oxford modes of life would be to exact an unfair sacrifice. Woodbridge fancied that he was making a most magnanimous concession by saying one evening, when his cousin announced himself engaged to a small evening party, "Well, since it is not a grand affair, pray take me with you. I am sick to death of spending my evenings alone."

"Let us go to the play, then. What do they give to-night at Drury Lane?" cried Frank, seizing a newspaper from the table of the Bond-street coffee-house where they were dining, in order to disguise his embarrassment. For it was precisely because Lady Mary Russell's parties were never "grand affairs," but

petits comités, composed of the thrice-filtered filtration of the fashionable world, that he felt the impossibility of introducing there, without a previous understanding, a man of uncouth demeanour, guilty of the crime of being a stranger to all whom not to know argues oneself unknown. Sir Henry was unendowed with a single qualification to succeed in such society. He was neither amusing nor amusable, nor privileged by the high charter of fashion to be *un*-amusable. A *bon-mot* never escaped his lips, but readily escaped his notice. He could not flatter, he could not even compliment where flattery was superfluous. He was neither fine enough to know every one, nor too fine to know any one. He had nothing to recommend him but plain sense, a handsome person, and twenty thousand a year; and Frank was perfectly aware that Lady Mary would prefer a man, however plain, whose sense was of a less literal nature. With regard to his fortune, as she had neither nieces

nor daughters to get rid of, she would only esteem it a guarantee against his taking the trouble to be agreeable.

"See!" he continued, pointing to the newspaper as these considerations glanced through his mind, "Mrs. Siddons plays Constance to-night. We shall scarcely amuse ourselves better than at the play."

"I hate the play, unless in a private box; and it will be too late to secure one," cried Woodbridge, instantly detecting Grenfell's reluctance that he should accompany him to his party; but, so far from suspecting the cause, that he immediately set down to jealousy, or the dread of exposing his *liaisons*, his cousin's evident consternation. With a view to bantering the tender solicitudes of Frank, he persisted therefore in his request to be presented to Lady Mary.

"I can just look in with you at Lady Mary Russell's party," said Sir Henry. "I was with you, you know, when the woman's billet-

doux arrived; and, as it is a mere tea-drinking *sans façon*, I apprehend that there is no occasion for being very full-dressed?"

Grenfell was silent. He knew that this tea-drinking party would be composed of some twenty or thirty of those thorny umpires of fashionable life who kill with a look and exterminate with a syllable, and that they were capable of making the country Baronet completely ill at ease by the mere expression of their fastidious countenances. His very opulence would tell against him. They would probably fancy that he presumed upon it to intrude thus unceremoniously into their circle; and punish him as Cogia Hassan was punished for the undue use of his "Open sesame."

"To say the truth," said he, after an awkward pause, "I should prefer proposing the introduction in the first instance to Lady Mary: she is one of those fine ladies with whom it is dangerous to take liberties, lest

she should take liberties in return. If I were to introduce a friend into her house without permission, I should have her sending me next Sunday to air her lap-dog in Marylebone fields. If you don't care to go to the play, my dear Woodbridge, I will play piquet with you at Nerot's, or whatever else you like better."

"No, no! At least don't let me detain you from your rendezvous!" cried Sir Henry, still convinced that Grenfell was putting forward false pretences. "Go to Lady Mary's; but be sure you obtain permission to take me with you to her next party."

Glad to escape from his dilemma, Grenfell hastened his departure; hoping that Sir Henry's indolence would again obtain the ascendancy, and check his momentary inclination for rushing into society, till friction against the crowd of public places had in some degree rubbed off his rusticity and *mauvaise honte.*

On entering Lady Mary Russell's drawing-room, Grenfell was surprised to find fifty or sixty persons assembled, nearly double the number of her ladyship's usual miniature whispering gallery.

"I asked these people for you," she replied, in answer to the remark of her young favourite. "There are two people here who requested me last night at Melbourne House to introduce them to you; and, as I do not choose to have it seen or said that everybody of my set is not acquainted with everybody, I invited a few more than usual, that the ceremony of introduction might pass unobserved."

"The Duchess and her three daughters are here then to constitute the evergreen hedges of a maze?" cried Frank, laughing. "But may I inquire whom I have been so fortunate as to inspire with curiosity?"

"Don't look so amiably conscious; my friends are neither beauties, wits, heiresses, nor anything else accounted interesting by the narrow

views of one-and-twenty. No! it is not even Lady Clowance, to whom I perceive that your eyes are wandering, — though, by the way, she gives a ball next week, and will be delighted to have you."

"A ball!" cried Grenfell, struck by a bright idea. "Dare I ask whether your ladyship has interest and charity enough to obtain an invitation for my cousin, Sir Henry Woodbridge?"

"The Woodbridge with the fine estate in Hampshire? Take him with you without ceremony. Lady Clowance has daughters to marry; precisely the people who suit me least, suit her best. *En attendant*, it does not follow that because the pretendants to your acquaintance to-night are neither beauties nor heiresses, they are undeserving your attention. Condescend, for my sake, to be a little interested in the matter."

"I only wait your orders, to ascertain to what extent I am to express my eagerness."

"There sits one of the candidates! The venerable personage next to the Duchess."

"Lord Teviot?" cried Frank in amazement. "Are you quite sure that it was to me his lordship desired an introduction? At Oxford his son Lord Warkworth used to treat me with solemn contempt. His father must mistake me for some other person."

"Lord Teviot, like other official men, never makes mistakes. You do not owe your importance in his eyes to Lord Warkworth's good report; but to his having met your family the other day at Raynham Lodge, some sister, — mother, — aunt, — I scarcely know what,—and either promised them, or has some motive of his own, to seek your acquaintance. If not thankful, be acquiescent! Lord Teviot has more in his power than more ostensible members of the cabinet."

"Why deprive me by such an argument of the satisfaction of marking my passive obedience to your ladyship's commands?" cried

Frank, following Lady Mary towards the Earl, and readily taking his part in the ceremony of introduction; while the Dowager Duchess (the evergreen hedge) whispered to her elderly daughter, as they watched the transaction, "At her old system, you perceive,—pushing on in public life the coxcombs she wants an excuse for patronising in private!"

Lord Teviot was dignifiedly affable in replying to Grenfell's inquiries after his son.

"Warkworth is at the House," he replied. "Warkworth rarely goes to balls. Warkworth makes a capital member. I could wish that he allowed himself a little more relaxation; but, aware that a great deal is expected of him, he is anxious not to disappoint us. I had the honour, Mr. Grenfell, of making the acquaintance last week in Hampshire of another Oxford friend of Warkworth's, your cousin Sir Henry Woodbridge."

"Sir Henry is now in town," observed Grenfell.

"A very fine young man," replied Lord Teviot with an air of compassionate interest; "but, from my son's account, I fear lamentably neglected. Fine estate, considerable county interest, valuable influence; but unlikely, I am informed, to take any active part in public life?"

"At my cousin's age and mine, which are pretty nearly the same, it is scarcely possible, my lord, to foretell what part may hereafter appear attractive," replied Frank. "Sir Henry is almost too young to be predicted of with safety."

"Nevertheless I have heard Mr. Grenfell predicted of by the best judges in a tone calculated to excite the most sanguine expectations of his friends," replied Lord Teviot with pompous politeness; "among whom it will gratify me to find myself and my son henceforward accounted. Where shall Warkworth have the honour of waiting upon Mr. Grenfell and Sir Henry Woodbridge?"

And while giving the necessary information, Frank had tact enough to conjecture, though nothing wherefore, that though the precedency was assigned to himself by the cunning of the Earl, it was Sir Henry whom the wary Minister was striving to reach through his intermediation.

He was still engaged with Lord Teviot in that vague exchange of nothings which passes under the name of polite conversation, when his attention was attracted by the looks directed towards him by Lady Mary Russell, who stood conversing near the door with a man of distinguished air, whose narrow vulgar countenance was singularly at variance with the high-breeding of his demeanour; and scarcely had Lord Teviot returned to his place beside the Dowager, when the lady and the stranger approached, and Frank found himself presented to Lord Waterton!

"This is a pleasure of which I have been long ambitious," cried the Earl, extending his

hand in the most amicable manner towards his young cousin. "It is only within the last week, my dear Mr. Grenfell, that I became aware of your being settled in London; I trust you will enable Lady Waterton and myself to make up for the time we have lost in forming the acquaintance of so near a relative."

The coolness with which young Grenfell had received the advances of Lord Teviot gave way under the surprise and emotion produced by this unexpected recognition. He was not old enough to be aware of its importance to his position in society; he was not worldly enough to conjecture how much of Lord Waterton's courtesy was owing to the civilities he had seen bestowed upon William Grenfell's son by a man so eminent as Lord Teviot, or how much more to his adoption by the family at Hursley Park.

Lord Waterton was a man with the soul of a minnow. His father, harshly reared under the tyranny of the mother of William Grenfell,

had brought up his own son with the same sour severity. Disgusted by the spendthrift follies of his younger brother, so disgraceful to the whole family, Lord Waterton had enlarged upon the virtue of prudence to his son, till, like Aaron's rod, it was made to swallow up the rest. The present Lord made it the sole study of his life to do everything at less cost than other people. Every movement was made a matter of strict calculation; and, though careful not to deny himself the gratifications belonging to his situation in life, he enjoyed them at five farthings a moment less than they had ever been enjoyed before. Those luxuries which the Earl esteemed to be a becoming illustration of his caste, became in his case a degradation, in consequence of the shabby manner in which they were procured.

At Waterton House, hospitality was weighed out by ounces and pennyweights. In every invitation it was signified to the guest the exact number of days or hours he was expected

to stay. His carriage-horses and servants were despatched to the neighbouring inn; and the solitary lady's maid allowed to remain had reason to rejoice when her penance of starvation was ended. Prison discipline, or workhouse discipline, never exceeded the exactness of the allowance-system pursued in the servants' hall of the Earl of Waterton; and his country neighbours were almost justified in the caricature circulated, of his lordship weighing out its hourly stint to his daughter's canary-bird!

The amusing part of his parsimony was the stiff-necked dignity with which all his little shabbinesses were performed. Originally a man of polished manners, he took pride in the minuteness of his economy; and was never more pleased than when explaining to some lordly visitor the regularity of his domestic arrangements, and the excellence of his system. Economical stoves, ovens, digesters, mills, flues, were erected all over the premises; and there

was an expression of magnanimity in his lordship's twinkling grey eyes when enlarging upon the minimum of malt to which he had reduced the quality of his footman's small-beer, such as might have brightened the countenance of Colbert when laying before the Grand Monarque his schemes of gorgeous legislation.

So long as he remained uncertain of the way in which William Grenfell's children were left provided for, he had taken no note of their existence. But on learning that Frank and Bessy were domesticated at Hursley, — that young Grenfell had not only lived profusely at Oxford, but scrupulously paid his debts on quitting the university,—and that he was now about town the arm-in-arm companion at Tattersall's and the Clarendon of Sir Henry Woodbridge and his twenty thousand a year, to whom and which he was nearest of kin,—the Earl of Waterton began to feel it a duty to claim kinship with so near a relative, more especially one who stood so much in need of

kinsmanly counsel in the arrangement of his affairs.

Such was the individual on whom were wasted the warm emotions of Frank! who returned the pressure of Lord Waterton's hand with the feeling of respect due to the head of his father's family. Unconsciously to himself, he had cherished the desire of being on friendly terms with the Grenfells; an inclination which was now accomplished without concession or degradation on his own part. Lord Waterton had come every step of the way to meet him. Lord Waterton had volunteered a request that he would henceforward consider Waterton House as that of a friend and near relation.

It was evidently his lordship's intention to boast him both in public and private as his cousin.

CHAPTER IX.

A sort of stately fustian, or lofty childishness.
DRYDEN.

THE evening after Lady Mary's party, on returning from dining with his cousin to dress for the opera, Frank found a note, commanding him to repair immediately to Clifford-street, to tea. Lady Mary and his sister were just arrived from Hursley Park.

"This is very good of you, my dear Francis!" cried her ladyship as he entered the drawing-room. "I hope you did not inform Harry of our being here?"

"I had quitted him before I received Bessy's note. Are you much fatigued by your journey?" he continued, including his sister by a glance in his inquiry.

"Oh! never mind our journey. But tell me at once, when is it to be? Believe me, I am prepared for the worst!"

"When is what to be? The King's jubilee?" said Frank, aware how much the tongues of rumour were at that moment occupied with the approaching celebration.

"Nonsense! — I mean my son's marriage."

"Sir Henry going to be married, and never so much as apprise me of the event?" cried Grenfell, greatly surprised.

"Ay, ay! I see; he has put you on your guard!", exclaimed Lady Mary. "But all further disguise is useless! I know as well as you do, that he is engaged to one of the Beckfords."

Frank Grenfell replied by an immoderate fit of laughter, which Lady Mary was very near resenting by a fit of tears.

"Pray forgive me!" he exclaimed, recalled to becoming gravity by the remonstrances of his sister. "But I cannot help being amused

at finding the bagged fox still ready to be turned out. Be under no apprehensions, my dear madam. Sir Henry has been six days in town, and I undertake to assure you that he has never so much as set foot in the Beckfords' house."

"How can you tell? You do not pass the whole day in his company. He may have a hundred engagements, Frank, with which you are unacquainted."

"For the sake of his candour, I choose to think not," replied Grenfell; "for we profess to have no secrets from each other. In this instance I am certain of what I advance; for it was only yesterday Woodbridge mentioned that he must soon call in Cumberland Place, as old Crewe would take care to acquaint Sir William of his being in town."

"There! you see he is at least on the point of renewing this terrible connection," moaned Lady Mary.

"Adding," resumed Frank, "that he felt

himself a dead letter in the Beckfords' society, where nothing is ever talked of but music."

"Well! if Harry has brought himself to avow that much," cried Lady Mary, "perhaps my arguments may effect the rest. I begin to have hopes."

"Pardon me, however, for suggesting," said Frank, "that the less you annoy him on the subject the better: Woodbridge is an odd fellow; and I am convinced that nothing is so likely to drive him into the Beckfords' circle, (which is far from a desirable one,) as finding, or fancying, that people are in league to keep him out of it."

"I should be rather surprised to find Harry classing me among 'people!'" exclaimed Lady Mary. "However, it is certainly a comfort that matters have not proceeded to extremities. I have been in an agony all the way up to town, fancying that very likely the settlements might be drawn out before

I arrived. I have been forced to travel in the most rash, precipitate manner! The housekeeper arrived only yesterday to see the house put in order, and the beds properly aired; and though I have great confidence in Smith, I must say that I am not altogether comfortable about the mattresses in my room. If you knew, my dear Francis, the horror I have of a damp bed! I was saying this morning to my brother Clangarvan, (who came up with us, and is gone off to dine at his club,) that, if it were not for affronting Smith, I should really prefer sleeping at Nerot's, where I find Harry has established himself."

Again did Frank endeavour to persuade her that nothing would be so likely to drive her son to an hotel in some distant quarter of the town, as this species of what might appear like persecution; till, having sent off her ladyship in a fit of dudgeon to squabble

with the housekeeper, Frank found himself at length at liberty to turn to his sister.

"How well you look, my dear Bessy, — how bright, and how blooming!" cried he, contrasting her intelligent and healthy countenance with those among which his days and nights were passing, — withered with rouge and dissipation into the hardness of a mask.

"Would I could return the compliment, dearest Frank!" cried Miss Grenfell, affectionately enlacing her arm in his as they sat together on the sofa. "But I don't like your looks at all! In the first place, you are too well dressed to please me. I see nothing of Lincoln's Inn in that waistcoat—nothing of Westminster Hall in that Cavendish crop! I am sadly afraid you are amusing yourself much too well in London!"

"I am amusing myself; but don't be afraid of the result," cried young Grenfell. "It was not in the nature of things for me to

settle down at once to business, after the life I had been leading."

"It was in the nature of your fortunes to require it, my dear brother; and surely it will be less easy to tie yourself down to the stake after further indulgence?"

"You are mistaken. Repletion loathes the sight of food; and your drunkard never nauseates his claret till after a night of excess. I assure you, I am getting almost weary of playing the fool. The jingling of the cap and bells becomes as monotonous as any other music; and, by next term, I shall be ready to fag away in earnest. Meanwhile, Miss Bess, I have news for you. Lord Teviot, who is very much edified by 'the wiselike way in which you supped your broth' at Raynham Lodge, is desirous of cultivating yours and your unworthy brother's acquaintance."

"Lord Teviot! the man who makes those everlasting speeches?"

"No, my dear, the Minister who makes

those everlasting speeches; there is not only a distinction, but a difference. Lord Teviot is one of the fortunate few who have more good things to bestow than to utter. If he cannot make you a convert by his arguments, he can make your fortune by his patronage."

"Not yours, however, my dear brother, unless you have renounced your politics as well as your profession," said Bessy gravely.

"You are too literal, child," cried her brother. "Nor could Lord Clangarvan himself be more emphatically in the wrong. The utmost I am likely to be called upon to accept from his Majesty's Minister, Lord Teviot, is a dull dinner; and, as his son was a brother Oxonian, I need not fear to stand committed by accepting so small a benefit. Besides, I am growing a great man, and presume upon my quality. With whom do you think I walked up St. James's-street this morning? And who do you suppose is to present me at the next levee? Neither more nor less than Lord Waterton!"

"It could scarcely be less, if half the stories I have heard of his shabbiness are authentic," said Miss Grenfell proudly. "I confess I have no partiality for the Grenfell family. I cannot overcome my resentment of their treatment of my poor father!"

"You might just as well say you could not forgive King George III. his grandfather's usage of the Pretender!" cried Francis, almost angrily. "The present Earl was never so much as acquainted with either my father or mother."

"The more his shame; had they not been in adversity, he would not have forgotten that they were his aunt and uncle."

"I am half inclined to exclaim to you with Douglas,—

> 'Oh! rake not up the ashes of our fathers:
> Implacable resentment was their crime.'

But, on second thoughts, I will only remark, that Lord Waterton seems inclined to meet us in an affectionate, kinsmanlike way;

and that it would be both ungrateful and impolitic to reject the olive branch."

"Say ungrateful, my dear Frank, as you would have said six months ago, and I will readily obey your suggestion. But I shall be too much mortified at finding you already making sacrifices of conscience to expedience, to be swayed by the word impolitic."

"Call it what you please then, my dear Roman sister,— my bright goddess of magnanimity," cried Frank, gallantly kissing her hand, "provided you promise to accompany me to Arlington-street, the first fine day?"

"Accompany you where?" cried Lady Mary, who was re-entering the room.

"To visit Lord and Lady Waterton, who are most anxious to make her acquaintance," he replied.

"Oh! you have patched up a reconciliation with your father's family, eh?" demanded Lady Mary, seating herself, and shaking her ruffled plumes.

"With the present head of the family there was no rupture to need a reconciliation," observed young Grenfell. "Till lately, I never fell in my cousin's way; and, at the time of my father's misfortunes, Lord Waterton was a school-boy."

"I conclude, then, he intends to do something for you?" cried Lady Mary, who had no more delicacy than the hassock on which her foot was extended. "But I'm sure I hope Lord and Lady Waterton won't always be wanting to take Bessy out of the way; it would be extremely inconvenient to me, and, after all that has happened, really scarcely fair."

Frank Grenfell readily interpreted "after all that has happened," into "after the refuge my generosity has afforded you both for the last three years." But towards Lady Mary he invariably exhibited a patient forbearance grounded upon thorough contempt. He compassionated her deficiencies of mind too much to be angry.

"Lady Waterton is not the least likely to

infringe upon your ladyship's claims," said he. "If you will have the kindness to let my sister leave her card some morning in Arlington-street, there will probably be an end to Bessy's intercourse with the family."

Miss Grenfell meanwhile, who had hoped to obtain further information from her brother respecting his pursuits and connections, was provoked to find that, at Lady Mary's first renewal of her grievances against Smith and the warming-pan, Frank hastened to take leave; more particularly as he had already announced an engagement which would prevent his visiting Clifford-street on the morrow. He called it an unavoidable engagement, and Bessy consequently concluded it to be a professional one; yet, when Sir Henry made his appearance next day, it appeared that Frank was only gone to Richmond as the escort of Lady Mary Russell!

"And who is Lady Mary Russell?" inquired Miss Grenfell anxiously.

"A deuced pretty woman who kissed her hand most affectionately to Frank as I was driving him up Bond-street yesterday."

"Unmarried, then?" still persisted Bessy.

"I never asked. I should think so, for she was alone in a devilish pretty chariot,—the best turned-out thing I have seen since I came to town. Frank passes half his time at her house; I suspect there is some attachment in the case."

"I earnestly trust not," exclaimed Miss Grenfell, reddening with anxiety. "My brother's fortune scarcely suffices to support himself, and marriage must consequently be out of the question."

"Immediate marriage," replied her cousin, touched by her unconcealable sisterly solicitude. "But, perhaps, an engagement might be the best thing that could befal him. A man seldom works in earnest, without a motive. Frank would have an inducement to apply to the law, in the prospect of a wife and family."

Miss Grenfell seemed surprised to hear anything so nearly resembling an argument from her sauntering, inconclusive cousin; and was about to question him further touching Lady Mary's connections and associations, when her aunt, indignant that any one's affairs should have precedency over hers in her own drawing-room, began to impress upon her son the advantage of removing from his hotel to her roomy residence.

"You will be so much more quiet and comfortable here, my dear Harry!" said she coaxingly.

"I am not particularly fond of being quiet," he replied, "and my London habits would probably prevent you from being comfortable."

"But they need not interfere with me, my dear. You would have Bessy's rooms, which communicate with the back staircase and are divided from mine by the front; and Bessy should move up stairs to Smith's apartment."

"I should be very sorry to disturb Miss Grenfell, and very much afraid of disturbing Mrs. Smith," replied Sir Henry. "In short, it suits me better to remain where I am."

"Well, I can only say that it will wear a very strange appearance to the world for you to be living at an hotel, with half my house unoccupied," cried her ladyship, "as your uncle Clangarvan was saying only yesterday."

"Don't tell me what he said," interrupted Sir Henry ungraciously. "Lord Clangarvan has neither authority over my conduct nor influence over my opinions; and, if he knew anything of the world, he would be aware that I am much more decorously established at an hotel."

"But, my dear boy," whined Lady Mary, who was always reduced to the pathetic when her son assumed this positive tone, "how are my friends to know where to find you? The season will wear away, and you will be invited nowhere."

"I shall be invited by those who take the trouble of inquiring about me."

"In the hurry of giving a ball, people have no time to lose in making inquiries."

"People who give balls would lose their time in making inquiries after me," retorted her son. "I am not a dancing man; and I don't intend to go to a ball this season."

"Good Lord! then what's the use of being in London?"

"Is ball-going the only purpose of living in town?" inquired Sir Henry coolly.

"And I, who have actually answered Lady Clowance's card, in your name as well as my own! She will think it so very extraordinary if you don't go, after all!"

"Lady Clowance must reconcile herself to my absence from her party. When is it?"

"The 2nd of May."

"I have an engagement for the 2nd of May."

"To the Beckfords', I don't doubt!" cried Lady Mary with ineffable scorn.

"You must stoop lower, my dear mother! To the Cider Cellar!"

"The what?"

"On the 2nd of May, I dine at the Bedford with a party of Christchurch men, and we are to finish at the Cider Cellar!"

"Harry! you cannot be in earnest. You surely don't mean to throw yourself away in this dreadful manner! The Beckfords, — the Bedford, — the Cider Cellar! Do you expect that people will court you into good society, while you frequent such wretched low company?"

"I prefer agreeable company, high or low, to the deadly dulness of what is called good society!" replied Sir Henry. "With respect to the Beckfords, they belong to our own class in life. Sir William is an old Baronet, — has been in parliament"—

—"And remains head over ears in debt! Such a set of people, too, as they have at the house! Admit that you never saw such a set of people."

"I shall be better able to tell you to-morrow, as I am now about to call there," cried young Woodbridge, irritated by his mother's irrational attack upon his friends. "I feel like a fish out of water without Frank. Frank's ride to Richmond has thrown the morning like lead upon my hands."

"Come, come! spend an hour or two here, like a rational being," pleaded Lady Mary, perceiving that her son had taken up his hat and gloves. "I have a hundred things to tell you about Hursley, and messages from Dr. Hartwell, and I don't know what."

"Don't you?—I'm afraid I can't assist your memory," replied her undutiful offspring: "therefore,"—

"Here,—Bessy, Bessy! do come out of that tiresome book-room, and help to entertain your cousin," screamed her ladyship to Miss Grenfell, who had retired into the adjoining chamber on the first symptom of a dispute between Sir Henry and her aunt. "Here's

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himself in a house where he was so unceremoniously welcomed.

"When will you dine with us?" cried Sir William.

"You must come and ride with the girls," said her ladyship.

And if to these pleasant invitations Sylvia and Selina had not added, "How do you like the new opera? We have got all the concerted pieces; but we don't get on so well with them now we have no longer poor Radicati in the house!" he would have accepted both without hesitation; but, thus reminded, he remembered that after the family dinner would come family music, and that his horses would probably be kept loitering at the door while this duet and the other trio were repeated, as it had often happened at Oak Hill; and he consequently evaded both engagements, and satisfied himself with a cheerful chatty morning visit.

Unendowed with any superfluity of sense or

feeling, the Beckfords were pleasant companions. Their naturally high spirits caused them to view things in a favourable light. The world was all sunshine to them, and they all sunshine to the world. The house in Cumberland Place was just such a one as men love to repair to, to get rid of their cares or ennuis, and to which they hasten with the earliest intelligence that they are going to be married; the Beckford girls themselves being the last in the world to inspire a sentiment, or become the objects of a lasting passion. Laughing and chatting on till thirty, the younger generation finds out that girls of this description are growing old maids before they have taken thought of making an impression upon their contemporaries.

"What has become of Mr. Grenfell?" inquired Lady Beckford of Sir Henry Woodbridge, as soon as a couple of young men, lounging in, had persuaded her daughters away to the piano to "give them an idea of

the quartette of the second act of the new opera. "He has not left his card here since we came to town."

"Frank is studying the law," replied Sir Henry.

"So are Clarence Percy and young Ravensforth, yet one meets them everywhere."

"And don't you meet Grenfell?"

"Never! Sir William spoke of having seen him at the Opera; but, our box being always so full, he may not have found room to visit us."

"But at balls? Frank is out every evening!" said Woodbridge, beginning to suspect that his cousin might exaggerate the extent of his engagements. "Last night, there was Lady Mary Russell's; the night before, the Duchess of Huntley's."

"In that set we are not likely to meet," replied Lady Beckford; "I do not visit one of them."

"I understand! less desirable acquaint-

ances for your ladyship's daughters, than for Frank or myself."

"Pardon me, you do not understand," she replied, superior to the meanness of decrying that which she knew to be beyond her reach; "Lady Mary and the Duchess are much too fine for us. They could not visit a country Baronet's wife living in Cumberland Place, and coming to London for the amusement of her three daughters, any more than I some grocer's wife in the High-street at Swansborough! I know not by what charm Mr. Grenfell has obtained access to their clique; but I assure you it is a privilege to which many of the nobly born and highly bred pretend in vain."

"But what constitutes the pretext for exclusion?" demanded Sir Henry, Frank Grenfell's hesitation on the subject with regard to himself recurring disagreeably to his mind.

"That lies in the breast of the jury," replied Lady Beckford good-humouredly: "Lady Mary Russell and her confederates are too

'absolute, and in themselves complete,' to render an account to any one of their motives or proceedings."

"You will at least expound to me the attraction which produces so many candidates for them to reject?" he inquired. "Who is this Lady Mary Russell?—maid, wife, or widow?"

"Nearly all three, yet scarcely either," replied Lady Beckford in phrase paradoxical. "You might frequent her house for a whole season, without hearing mention of a husband, and consequently conclude her to be single or a widow. Yet were your attentions to become too pointed, Lady Mary would probably talk of her matron reputation, and request leave to dispense with the frequency of your visits!"

"But where is Mr. Russell all this time?" cried Sir Henry, much amused.

"Cosseting himself over a fire in his dressing-room, beside a table covered with decanters

of camomile tea, and all the treatises upon blue-pill that ever were written! A confirmed hypochondriac, who dines at three, sups upon white-wine whey, and retires to bed before nine."

"Lady Mary's habits are strangely suited to those of an invalid! Her parties for instance"—

—"Do not commence till the good man has been asleep for hours; and they are the quietest, because the finest in London;—no music, no dancing, no cards, no anything but conversation, and that of the pianissimo order."

"At all events, it is a good safe house for Frank," observed Sir Henry; "though I am puzzled to guess what amusement he finds there."

"In my opinion, fine people are born with the knack of being fine," replied Lady Beckford. "It is an endowment apart, like telling a story or making a speech."

Sir Henry seemed surprised.

" Mr. Grenfell has perhaps the vocation for being fine," resumed Lady Beckford; " and, if so, I agree with you that he is safe at Lady Mary's. He goes there because it is the right thing to go, and he can find entertainment in the unmeaning whispers of the select; but if not, if like the common herd he happen to have a heart, I am not so sure of his security. Fenced round by her own want of feeling, Lady Mary likes to amuse her leisure by attaching every year some young man of fashion to the house. There is no end to the trouble she will take to accomplish her purpose. She writes them notes by the thousand, and embroiders them waistcoats and sachets by the dozen; procures them invitations to every party, tickets for every opera; and, at every *déjeuner* or *partie de plaisir*, the favoured one has the honour of being preferred to be her cavalier for the day."

"A pleasant life enough for an idle man!" said Woodbridge, laughing.

"A dangerous one for a man of feeling," replied Lady Beckford gravely.

"Mackenzie's dead and gone, and the days of sentiment are over," cried the young Baronet. "Let her do her worst!—I see no danger for Frank!"

"Nor I, for I suspect your cousin was intended for a man of fashion," said Lady Beckford. "Still, I can fancy that there might exist a young man actually born young, actually fated to enter into life with a heart fresh and uncorrupted; and such a person might find his affections engaged by Lady Mary's advances, in a way to render the rest of his days unhappy, morose, and reckless. Public schools and a college life do their best, however, to cauterize the heart; and, for your cousin's sake, I trust he is already *blasé*, like nine

in ten of the fashionable young men about town."

The greater danger incurred by Francis Grenfell, meanwhile, was as imperceptible to Lady Beckford as to Sir Henry; the deadly influence of an order of society whose aims are so trivial. Lady Mary Russell's coterie resembled a stage of well-dressed puppets, or one of Giroux's baby-houses, rather than real life. It was all make-believe,—all littleness,—all frivolity; and, as people by accustoming themselves to wear microscopic glasses would lose the faculty of correctly measuring external objects with the naked eye, a man habituated to hear importance assigned only to the trivialities of life would deceive himself in the end as to their actual importance. The Sybarite complains of the rumpling of the rose-leaf; the Oriental princess, stagnating in the unnatural stillness of the harem, shrinks from the touch of a feather shed by the fan of her attendants; and a young man of high endow-

ments, confined to the enervating atmosphere of one of these London boudoirs, becomes enfeebled in mind and sensitive to the slightest incidents.

With plausible deceit, the doll-like Aspasias of these puppet-show circles claim proudly as their own certain Nestors of mighty renown in the political or literary world, careful not to inform the young aspirant that these elderly heroes, so far from having

"Betrayed
Their noon of manhood to the myrtle shade,"

were careful to avoid its effeminating influence till their laurels had not only sprouted but required pruning, and they could afford to hazard a leaf or two by basking in the unnatural forcing-house of fashionable life.

But, at one-and-twenty, the asseverations of coral lips are apt to be taken upon trust; and when Lady Mary Russell, in pointing out to the successive *protégés*, in whose fate and fortunes she professed to interest herself, the

ex-Lord Chancellors, ex-Premiers, distinguished orators, and famous captains, frequenting her house, whispered with an expressive glance, "Behold your prototypes! My friends have a happy knack of distinguishing themselves. Some day or other, when you are on the woolsack or the bench, in Downing-street or Whitehall, you will remind me of my prophetic skill, and thank me for having set the stone a rolling."

Thus cheered and thus deceived, it became doubly delightful to waste morning after morning in Lady Mary's boudoir, writing notes for her, or indexes for her album, or a code of instructions for her page, or an abstract of the proceedings of the season to amuse some former *protégé*, who, after ruining himself by inches in luxuries beyond his means,— the mere necessaries of his fine associates, (such as horses, carriages, trinkets, opera-boxes, new works or old china, five-guinea whist and unlimited loo,)—was gone to

die of malaria in some secretaryship, or commissionership, procured by Lady Mary's patronage, at Fernando Po, Timbuctoo, or the capital of Ava.

It was his duty as a *cavaliere servente* to waste for her sake his time, which was his only treasure: and what was Federigo's sacrifice of his falcon compared with Frank Grenfell's sacrifice of his time, comprising, as it did, his hopes of distinction, and the embryo of a noble career stifled by the insignificance around him? Nothing is lighter than a feather; but gathered into a mass, from Desdemona's days to our own, nothing ever proved more ponderously fatal!

Meanwhile his days were days of pleasantness, if not of peace. He was seeing what is called the best of London society. Lady Mary had made him free of the houses of her set; and, though these comprised the *élite* of fashion, they served only to enhance in his estimation the quiet, easy, well-bred

nonchalant tone of her own. Later in life he would have preferred the excitement and stimulus of younger coteries, where the vulgar delights of music, dancing, cards, private theatricals, and a certain degree of excess characteristic of the *roueries* of the times, gave a fillip to the lagging hours. But, at present, all this movement was supplied by the fervour and newness of young Grenfell's feelings. The tranquil inanity of Lady Mary's clique was a relief and resource from the tumult of his own warring emotions.

"You must go with me to Lady Clowance's ball to-morrow night," said he, entering Sir Henry's bed-room, where the young Baronet was "pinned to a midday couch" by headache, arising from a night's carouse with the Oxford set to which he had been thrown over by his cousin.

"My dear fellow! don't talk of balls," cried Woodbridge, passing his hand through his dishevelled locks.

"Nay, but I must, if only to save you from a recurrence of your present qualms,—whether of conscience or claret, I presume not to determine. Give everything a fair trial. Take a look at the *beau monde*, and see how you like its galas and fêtes, before you sink into cider-cellars and Burton ale-houses past hope of redemption. Last year I liked my spree, like yourself and others; but, the moment my senses became familiar with the garden of the Houris, I ceased to find pleasure in breaking watchmen's heads, and passing the night in a lock-up room, smelling of cheese, porter, and tobacco. I do not enjoy my sparkling champagne the less for drinking it in good company. You glory in getting behind the scenes at the Opera; come with me behind the scenes of *le grand monde*."

"Don't be a puppy and talk gibberish, when English will serve your turn," said Sir Henry, making an effort to rise. "Is this Lady Clowance a friend of yours?"

"A friend of my friend Lady Mary Russell, who procured us the two invitations," replied Grenfell; and, with Lady Beckford's intelligence in his mind, Sir Henry immediately determined on accompanying his cousin to a house which he concluded to be one of the resorts of the set which for Grenfell's sake he was curious to examine. He had either forgotten or purposely disregarded his refusal to accompany his mother to the ball of Lady Clowance, who, though occasionally admitted into Lady Mary's coterie as being the near relative of Mr. Russell, was in fact so far from being one of the polished corners of their temple of fashion, as to be an annual giver of crowded balls, and a frequenter of all the well-dressed mobs in town.

One of the first objects, therefore, that saluted the eye of Sir Henry, as, like most shy young men affecting affectation as a cover to their *mauvaise honte*, he stood leaning with Grenfell in the doorway, was his mother,

radiant with smiles, diamonds, and satin ; but scarcely had her own fallen on the two young men, when her brow became overclouded. Instead of rejoicing to see her son make his appearance in society on any inducement, she was full of indignation at finding her own invitations disregarded.

"What will Lady Clowance think of both of us!" she exclaimed, as soon as she could fasten upon Sir Henry. "I positively wrote her an excuse in your name, and told her you were seriously indisposed."

"If she is a good-hearted woman, she will rejoice at my sudden recovery."

"But, my dear Henry, consider in how ridiculous a situation you place me by these caprices!"

"We do stand in rather a ridiculous situation just now. We are deucedly in the way of the dancers!" said her undutiful offspring, moving hastily off; and his first inquiry, on rejoining Frank at the other end of the room,

was, "Who was that handsome woman you spoke to just now?"

"I spoke to no handsome woman; I shook hands with Lord Waterton."

"I mean a woman dancing with a tall man in a blue coat."

"My dear Woodbridge, you must be dreaming!" cried Frank; "that was my sister."

Sir Henry smiled incredulously. "It is you who are dreaming," said he: "come with me and I will point out to you the person I mean; the set is not yet over."

But, on returning to the spot, it appeared that the couple exciting Sir Henry Woodbridge's curiosity (according to the custom of country-dances, of which a set used to be formed twice as long as a London drawing-room would contain,) had "danced down," and disappeared; and, Grenfell being now surrounded by troops of friends, his cousin considered it only fair to go alone in pursuit

of the lofty beauty who had captivated his attention.

"Poor Frank has some excuse for being partial," mused he as he jostled through the throng, "for certainly Miss Grenfell is a most attached sister; but the idea of fancying her qualified to attract attention in a London ball-room!"

At length he caught a glimpse of his beauty; an imperfect one indeed, for her back was towards him and her face uplifted in conversation with a heavy-looking middle-aged man, whom he concluded to be Lord Teviot, from the fussy air of ceremony with which he was presenting Lord Warkworth to the young lady. Now Warkworth had been an object of aversion to Woodbridge and his cousin during their college life. They hated his solemn pedantry and dry tone of pretension; but never had Sir Henry hated him more than now, when he beheld the dark-haired nymph

curtsey graciously in recognition of the introduction; and after a few words between them, which looked exceedingly like an invitation for the next two dances, given and accepted, move away on the arm of her partner, who had stood patiently silent during their colloquy.

As the young lady proceeded onwards, the dull father and duller son stood contemplating the grace of her movements, conversing together thereof in evident commendation; and, for a moment, Woodbridge felt almost envious of the rank in life which entitled the solemn Earl to bestow his uninteresting son as a partner upon the finest girl in the room. He looked round for Grenfell to renew his interrogations concerning the lady; but Frank was now the centre of a group of fashionable young men, before whom Woodbridge's Eton and Oxford experience warned him not to betray ignorance in so important a branch of learning as the identities of fashionable life.

"Ha! my dear boy, how are you?" exclaimed Sir Robert Crewe, approaching him with a shake of the hand, purporting to mark to all around him his affectionate intimacy with a young Baronet of twenty thousand per annum. "Glad to find you have thought better of it. By the Lord Harry, sir! I had no patience to learn from Lady Mary that you were prepared to set your face against balls. No handsome face of one-and-twenty ought to be set against anything of the kind! Upon my soul and honour! I said to her ladyship, when she was so good, in sending your excuses to Lady Clowance, to ask for an invitation for so lumbering, good-for-nothing an old fellow as myself, I would rather a million of times see my young friend figuring away in 'haste to the wedding' than appear in his place. *Verbum sat.*"

"Can you inform me," said Sir Henry, by way of reply to a rhapsody that was unanswerable, "who is the handsome woman in the

white satin dress, who has just crossed into the other room?"

"My dear boy, there are thousands of charming creatures present in white satin dresses. But, if you want to particularize, I'm your man. By George, sir! I flatter myself I may say I know every pretty woman in town, — the privilege of my age, young fellow! An intimacy with old Sir Robert commits neither him nor them."

"Let us go in search of her then," cried Sir Henry, pushing Sir Robert towards the door; entangled in the crowd of which, instead of proceeding, the General seized the hands of Julia Loveden, who was entering the ball-room with her partner.

"I need not ask you how you do, my dear. 'Pon my soul and honour, never saw you so blooming in my life!—Did not know Lady Raynham was in town!—By George! his lordship will think me sadly remiss. When did you come?"

"We came last night. And now let me go, or I shall lose my place."

"Let you go, indeed!—Before you have granted a bow or smile, my dear, to Sir Henry Woodbridge. Sir Henry—where's Sir Henry?—Woodbridge, my dear fellow!"

And while the noisy old gentleman gazed round him bewildered, Miss Loveden escaped on one side, as Sir Henry had already done on the other.

Before Sir Robert Crewe could join him, he had attained the object of his curiosity; and the exclamation of "Bessy!" that burst from his lips when, turning towards him, she displayed the countenance of his cousin beaming as he had never yet beheld it, and the form of his cousin enhanced by an elegance of array such as he had never before seen it assume, evinced the excess of his surprise. It was years since he had been even startled into naming her otherwise than as Miss Grenfell.

CHAPTER XI.

How void of reason are our hopes and fears!
What, in the conduct of our life, appears
So well design'd,—so luckily begun,—
But, when we have our wish, we wish undone!
DRYDEN'S JUVENAL.

THERE are certain persons in the world whose vocation, albeit a valuable one to the community, appears to be singularly unenviable;—the naturalist, whose delight in the works of nature consists in desiccating flowers for herbals,—in impaling beautiful insects,—stuffing rare birds,—and preserving dead in spirits all that others admire in life and animation.

Lady Mary Russell had made to herself a task in society equally repellent. It seem-

ed her pleasure to wither up the impulses of generous natures, to impale every soft emotion, and pry into and analyse the brain of every human being, regardless of its sufferings or destiny. Like Cleopatra, she amused herself by trying the strength of her poisons upon her slaves.

Rarely did she omit an opportunity of cauterizing, or contracting by astringents, the delicate sensibilities of her associates; and Frank Grenfell had more than once shrunk under the severity of her experiments.

"Shall you be with me early to-night at the Opera?" said she, one Saturday, as they were riding together in the Park.

"I fear not. I dine with Lord Teviot."

"With Lord Teviot!" she replied, raising her eyebrows. "What can he want of you that he asks you to dinner?"

"I fear I stand more in need of favours from his lordship than he of mine," said Grenfell with a smile.

"That may be a reason for your accepting his invitation, but not for his making it. But I see! They talk of a dissolution. He wants to get at Sir Henry Woodbridge, who, I am told, has considerable influence, and is to come in for one of his own boroughs."

"Then, why not attack him with ministerial soup and patés, rather than myself?" inquired Grenfell.

"Because Sir Henry Woodbridge, who is shy and prejudiced, is more likely to succumb to the influence of his favourite cousin than to the stale flattery of being asked to dinner."

"While his cousin, you would infer, is easier to be tickled!"

"To be candid, own that you are delighted to find yourself one among the notabilities of the day," observed Lady Mary with a searching glance.

"Pour faire le nombre de quarante,
Ne fallait-il pas un zéro?"

quoted Grenfell good-humouredly. "The

most insignificant dog in London sometimes makes the twentieth at a wholesale Saturday dinner-party; and, even previous to your ladyship's explanation, I was not enormously elated by the notice of the father of an old brother Oxonian."

"Why, you do not surely suppose that Lord Warkworth has his den in the family ark?" cried Lady Mary. "No, no! You will see nothing of your 'brother Oxonian,'—you will meet him at every table in London but his father's! There, you know, it must ever be his cue to sing second. Lord Warkworth has his snuggery in May Fair, whither the most eminent men are allured by his father's high place in the administration to eat a good dinner and deposit their good things. Like the beasts whose foot-prints were noticed going towards the den of the lion, but never returning, Lord Warkworth's guests enter his house full of brains, but are observed to be

sucked dry ere they depart. The man is a mere knowledge-pump !"

" At Oxford, however, he studied amazingly hard," observed Frank.

" Yes, he there imbibed the marrow of books as he now imbibes that of men," rejoined Lady Mary with a sneer; " but neither there, nor here, did Lord Warkworth ever give birth to an original idea. His mind resembles the poor ground which sends forth dwarfed and puny plants in return for the good seed cast upon it; the very facts and opinions he pilfers from others become diseased and dim in his keeping."

" I never heard you so bitter !" cried Grenfell, almost alarmed by her virulence.

" Because you never heard me discuss a person of whose success in life I am jealous on your account. Warkworth (for I have been at the trouble of consulting your Oxford oracles) was considered at college as much your inferior in power, as your superior in acquire-

ment. You had a dunce for your tutor, — he a pedant for his. He attained an honour, — you barely escaped disgrace. Already the paltry echoes of London small-talk are familiar with his name as that of one of the most rising young men of the day; while of yours they know only that you came in third at the last steeple-chase!"

"You are resolved, I see, to pique me into a blush," cried Grenfell.

"No; I am only anxious to explain why my spleen is excited by the laurels predestined to that empty head of Lord Warkworth. From his leading-strings that boy was reared to become a statesman! A heavy, consequential, man-in-office-like gait was inculcated upon him in his schoolboy-hood. He was born to become a minister, bred to become a minister, tutored to become a minister. His words, looks, and movements are calculated by the stop-watch; and even at Eton the young gentleman was never allowed to 'commit himself.'"

"That was committing a grievous fault at a public school, where the greater the sinner the greater the saint!" cried Frank playfully.

"Any other young man, from whom so much was expected, would have already rashly adventured an attempt in the House," continued Lady Mary. "But mark the results of Lord Teviot's long experience—(even fools, you know, are made wise by experience) — the House of Commons is the only house where this promising young sprig of statesmanship is required to hold his tongue. Papa knows too well the fatal influence of a premature exhibition. Till the timber of his sapling has been sufficiently seasoned, he knows it is not *le bois dont on fait des sénateurs.* Lord Warkworth has only arrived at the point of being puffed by the hangers-on of the party, cited at public dinners, lauded in magazines as an example to 'the aspiring youth of nations!' He is yet too green a goose to be exposed to the fierce ordeal of roasting in parliament."

"The House seldom puts on its condemning cap for a young man of high connections, who, by right hereditary, must become one of the lawgivers of the country," said Grenfell; "particularly when he shows the laudable desire of distinguishing himself."

"Not when his position in life is fully appreciated, and his purpose properly understood. For which reason Lord Teviot chooses his hopeful son to wait till next session before he tempts the award of gods, men, and columns."

"Success to him!" cried Grenfell with a sigh. "It is not from his example we have to learn that, 'some are born great.'"

"Were I but sure of seeing it proved by yours that 'some achieve greatness!'" exclaimed Lady Mary with one of her most fascinating smiles; "could I only persuade you that the right course for Lord Warkworth is the wrong one for you! It is good for him to have his silence quoted as the abstraction of a profound thinker, and sit at meat among the elders of

the people; but it is wrong for you. Should it be noted that you are the guest of a Cabinet Minister, it will be set down in the world that you are a Tory; and, when it is seen that nothing is done for you by your official friends, the neglect will be set down to incompetency."

"*Tout ce tintamarre pour une omelette!*" exclaimed Frank, quoting the expression of the Catholic sailor, when throwing overboard in a storm at sea the profane dish which, eaten on a Friday, he concluded to be the motive of the visitation. "May not so small an individual as myself eat his dinner in Spring Gardens, without attracting the attention of the universe?"

"It is not Mr. Francis Grenfell who will attract attention; it is the guest of the Cabinet Minister."

"But a fellow may surely dine with Lord Teviot who is no aspirant for place? My principles are too well known to my friends for them to suspect me of seeking official employ-

ment. Should the Whigs come into power, the case might alter."

"Indeed!" said Lady Mary gravely. "Have you then much parliamentary interest? In these times, you know, there is only one qualification for office,—the backing of so many votes: Downing-street, Horse-Guards, Admiralty, all are in the same tune. Talk to them of your talents, your services, your wounds,—your arm lost in Egypt, or your leg at Trafalgar, and you will be asked by some smirking prig of a secretary whether your demand is seconded by any influential person; which means, in my coarser phrase, Have you any parliamentary interest?"

"My interest is as blank as the rest of my claims," replied Grenfell less cheerfully.

"But you perceive the importance which Lord Teviot attaches to Sir Henry Woodbridge's adhesion?"

"True! there lies my salvation; for Woodbridge is sure to join the Opposition."

"I thought the Maclaren family were determined Tories?"

"The very motive of my assurance. Lord Clangarvan and Lady Mary have so laboured to bring him up, or, as Charles Lamb expresses it, 'drag him up' in their own principles, that he has thrown himself into the Liberal party for very opposition! Like the famous poetess Madame de la Suze, who in pure hatred of her husband became a Protestant, in order (according to Madame de Sevigné) that she might see him no more, in this world or the next!"

"Young Woodbridge's conversion to Whiggery will scarcely secure him from the sight of his relations; but it will prove a serious obstacle to your advancement in life."

"I always fancied that, as the friend of poor Fox and the Prince, your ladyship was the staunchest of Whigs?" cried Grenfell gaily.

"And so I am, as regards my personal

opinions. It is only the interests of those who are dear to me which induce me to undervalue the advantage of securing a vote."

Grenfell's reply to such a hint was warm, as might have been anticipated; and Lady Mary, as was her wont on such occasions, looked grave, drew back, and observed that nothing but her confidence in the purity of his regard would have induced her to speak so unreservedly. "Henceforward," she said, "she should keep a stricter guard over her words."

Grenfell, as was his wont, entreated forgiveness, and promised strict discretion for the future; and Lady Mary forgave, and Frank commenced his course of strict discretion by remarking,

"You think then that Lord Teviot's dinner to-day is an election trap?"

"I am sure of it."

"How I wish there were any decent pretext for sending an excuse!" cried Frank.

"Nonsense! For this once, go to your dinner.

'Wear thine eye thus; nor jealous nor secure:
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment;"

and, above all, eschew the dangerous pretensions of a table-wit! That hungry profession is overflowing; and you would be crushed in the attempt by jealous rivals, while the attempt itself lowered you in the estimation of well-bred people."

Grateful for this gentle guardianship of his renown, Frank dressed for his dinner-party, prepared to be as mute and dull as a mathematician, little suspecting that his Mentor was intent only upon circumventing his success in a circle remote from her own.

Had she been able to flatter herself that Lord Teviot's civilities to Mr. Grenfell were a tribute to her protection, she would have been eager to plume him for triumph; but, having readily detected the Minister's designs upon

the Woodbridge interest, Lady Mary Russell did not choose her *protegé* to establish himself in a set to which so many cogent motives might eventually direct his preference.

Lady Mary was really aware of the talents of the gifted being she was reducing to a nonentity. While her female friends concluded that her favour was attracted towards Frank Grenfell by his fine person, interesting countenance, and graceful manners, (above all by the last, which formed a charming relief to the coarseness of the bang-up Tom Hounslow, his predecessor in her ladyship's good graces,) her interest was in truth excited by the bright intelligence of his faculties. It was long since she had met in the dull round of fashionable life a mind so rich in original ideas, or so full of noble aspirations. She knew that study and reflection might foster these promising shoots into a growth more valuable; and that, left to spindle upwards into light, they would choke each other's

progress, and produce only a feeble and irregular coppice in place of a commanding forest. But, though proud of her discrimination in discovering such depth of promise in the idle, rambling, dissipated companion of young Hounslow and Lord Marytown, she had not soul to abjure her momentary amusement for the advancement of his glory. With the prodigality of the Indian, who cuts down a noble tree in order to plunder it of a honeycomb, she reduced the future Canning to the petty servitude of a boudoir.

At Lord Teviot's, the contact of superior men might wake the dormant instincts of the soul her Circean wand had subdued to lethargy. The guests at his lordship's table, save on occasion of cabinet dinners and other gatherings of his tribe, were rarely in unison with the empty dulness of their host. Lady Mary flattered herself her advice had depressed the genius of Frank. She trusted that for the present he was safe!

Strange waste of feminine ingenuity! Instead of being invited to join a party of ministerial bigwigs, Frank found, on entering his lordship's large, square, graceless drawing-room in Spring Gardens, that the Cabinet Minister was one of the stupid many who fancy that an agreeable dinner-party is formed by inviting those persons to enjoy each other's company on an especial occasion, who are heartily tired of it in the daily intercourse of life,—near relations and country neighbours.

In the estimation of some, a well-assorted party implies a party of persons already connected or familiar with each other; in the estimation of others, it implies a party of persons of congenial minds, who require only to be acquainted to become familiar. Lord Teviot belonged to the former category. Having invited Lady Mary Woodbridge, Bessy and Francis Grenfell, as an initiatory measure in the conquest of Sir Henry and his borough, he had no doubt of making the dinner agree-

able to them by inviting their Raynham Lodge neighbours, with all the family adjuncts of the Welsh Judge, the Dean, and their pains-taking ladies. As the table was limited to sixteen, there remained only room for Claudius Markham, an old-bachelor colleague of the Earl, who, hating clubs and coffee-rooms, dined like a gaberlunzie man throughout the season at one house or other of his ministerial brethren; and a Mr. Smith, a sort of useful hanger-on of all work belonging to the party.

"Lady Mary need not have been so much alarmed!" thought Frank as he found his arm under requisition to escort Mrs. Swinburn down to dinner. "My political principles are in no great danger in such an assemblage as this!" Nor could he resist a smile when reflecting upon the vast amount of political tactics with which he came prepared to rebut the machinations of a pursy old aunt, a greedy churchman, and needy jurist, to each and all of whom he and his politics were as imma-

terial as the uneatable *hors d'œuvres* dangling before them, like the display of an Italian warehouse, from Lord Teviot's old-fashioned *epergne*.

He was roused from his reverie by the joyous voice of Julia Loveden, whom he rejoiced to find seated by his side.

"Saul among the prophets!" said she, amazed to find the disciple of so well proclaimed a Whig as Lady Mary Russell dining with a man whom she had once heard him designate as the leaden weight closing the door of the cabinet, that kept in the Tories. "What are you doing here?—or rather, what are they going to do with you?"

"*Je mange mon potage*, and I hope they are going to help me to a slice of turbot," he replied; an answer which Mr. Smith, who had overheard the question, (being accustomed to look for a hidden meaning even in the barking of a lap-dog,) set down in his crooked mind as a *chef d'œuvre* of evasion.

"I remember one fine Christmas at Hursley Park," continued Miss Loveden, assuming a lower tone on perceiving the attention of Lord Teviot's jackal fixed on their proceedings, "when you and your cousin used to rally your unfortunate Seneca, Mr. John Hartwell, upon what you were pleased to call his confounded Toryism."

"In fixing the name of so great a philosopher upon poor Hartwell, may I inquire," said Frank good-humouredly, "whether it is on my cousin or myself you confer the dignities of Nero?"

"It would require sterner stuff than lies in either of you to form so consistent a monster!" said Miss Loveden. "Meanwhile, in spite of your interruption, (which, for one of the court party, I must needs consider vastly uncourtly,) allow me to resume my inquiry whether Sir Henry Woodbridge's absence to-day is to be understood as a sign that he proves stauncher than his cousin?"

"Woodbridge was not asked here. You take a highly flattering interest in his affairs?" observed Frank drily.

"In his affairs, none whatever. In his principles, just so much as arises from curiosity to learn whether the man is knave, fool, or philosopher, who has done me the honour of sending me to Coventry. But I forget that you are growing a stranger in Hampshire. You are perhaps still ignorant that your aunt and mine, like two old queens in a fairy tale, have thought proper to plan a match between me and Sir Henry. My hand was actually offered to him as ignominiously as if I had been born a Princess Royal!—nay, I had not even the cold comfort of being the first to enter my protest against the alliance. The first nay-say was wholly and absolutely his own."

"I no longer wonder that Woodbridge should be honoured by your good opinion!" said Frank with an ironical smile, almost startled by the reckless communicativeness of

one who, because a few years older than himself, assumed the privilege of treating him like a boy. "I admit that your favour is fairly earned!"

"Admire, I beseech you," resumed Miss Loveden, "the mysterious whisper which my uncle is at this moment pouring into the ear of Lady Mary! Do you know what they are about, and why we are all dining here? Lord Raynham has undertaken to secure the Woodbridges and Dronington for government, and promised Lady Mary, in return, a peerage for her son: a fair exchange, perhaps, as times and politics go; but, so long as Sir Henry's hand and mine are specified as the seals to the treaty, never to be accomplished! It would save a world of trouble to all parties if they would employ me as negotiator. Lord Clangarvan's idiotcy, and my uncle's back-stairs mysteriousness, will ruin a thriving project; and Mr. Grenfell would be spared the temptation of ministerial courtesies."

"You seem sadly in pain for my political virtue!" cried Frank bitterly.

"I should be sorry to see the brother of my friend Bessy disgrace himself by swallowing a hook so poorly baited!" replied Julia. "I, you know, (begging your pardon for talking so like Lord Thurlow,) live in the midst of political intrigues; and can guess to a hair the object of every dirty manœuvre. From the tub thrown out to catch a whale, to the wine-cooler thrown out to catch a minnow," she continued, slightly touching the wine-glass of her neighbour, "I see through all their policy. You have as little business here to-day, as I pleasure."

"Thanks for your double compliment!" said Grenfell, almost irritated by the systematic scorn of the young lady. "I regret that we are so little deserving the honour of Miss Loveden's attention."

"You underrate your company," she coolly replied. "My neighbour, Mr. Markham, is

a very entertaining person when the claret gets into his head sufficiently to drive out of it the thousand amusing anecdotes which long experience has lodged in his brain. Even yourself, Mr. Grenfell, whether as a Hampshire acquaintance or my friend Bessy's brother, I should feel gratified to meet, had I patience with a man who suffers himself to be blown hither and thither like chaff,—yesterday a Whig, and the *patito* of a Lady Mary Russell; to-day a Tory, the tool of an Earl of Teviot!"

"Your arrows, like those of the wild Indians, are headed with flint," said Grenfell in a remonstrating tone; "and, as there is a chance that at least one of the sixteen persons present may overhear the attack,"—

"*Non tema!*—thirteen out of the number have ears only for themselves; the fourteenth, the amiable gentleman opposite, who has booked every syllable I have been uttering, has

ears for everybody, but a tongue only for Lord Teviot; and Mr. Smith knows better than to blab what his patron would never believe,—that a niece of Lord Raynham could be so false to the party as attempt to scare away one of its intended proselytes."

"I am, then, an intended proselyte; and you are giving yourself all this cruel trouble only to"—

"What can I do better between the dull pauses of such a repast? A strong bitter is an excellent zest! But, to crown my counsels, (for it is time that you should say a word to my sister on your right hand, while I divide my attentions with old Markham on my left,) believe me, my good friend, you are choosing a rash moment for ratting."

"I am not ratting," interrupted Frank, growing really angry. "You have no more right to suppose me a Tory from meeting me at a ministerial table, than I to conclude

you frivolous and misconducted, from meeting you at Lady"—

"No scandal about Queen Elizabeth!" interrupted Miss Loveden gaily. "I repeat to you once more that our people have not wherewithal to repay an act of treachery. The bank from which you would have to draw your thirty pieces of silver will be bankrupt before you have time to present your Treasury warrant. Our party is divided against itself, and cannot stand. Beware of being entangled in its ruin. No one pities the fall of a man who drops with a faction to which he has deserted."

"You do me scandalous injustice!" cried Frank. But he spoke in vain; already Miss Loveden was engaged in conversation with old Claudius Markham: and Grenfell was mortified to note the contrast between the saucy tone of defiance in which she had been conversing with himself, and the deferential

manner in which she sat listening to the oft-told, but well-told tales, which her uncle's colleague (now that his two courses were discussed) found himself at leisure to recite for the young lady's entertainment.

CHAPTER XII.

When men of rank sacrifice dignity to ambition, without a distinct object, and work with low instruments for low ends, the whole composition becomes low and base.

BURKE.

THE political epoch which a handsome dissipated young barrister presumed to treat with levity, and concerning which a giddy girl, case-hardened by half a dozen years' familiarization with ministries and ministers, presumed to utter these sinister auguries, was one of great historical interest.

It was the last great struggle between the Whigs and Tories fought under royal banners. The Whigs were still full of trust in the Prince of Wales; the Tories still reliant

upon their anointed sovereign; neither of them having any cause for supposing that the chastening hand of Providence was about to strike down the kingly patron of the Walcheren expeditionists, or that George Prince of Wales was about to sink into George Prince Regent. Parties ran high, each confident in its chief. Disaster had fallen upon the Tory armaments abroad; and the self-assumed partisans of liberty at home were accordingly on the watch to "up clubs," in the wantonness of domestic turmoil; while the fine old English gentleman of the present day (in those times a gay young spark of a patriot in blue and buff) enjoyed the triumph of being offered as a victim to the huzzas of a mob, whom he then called the people, and now calls the populace.

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Such was the state of public affairs when young Grenfell, startled in the midst of his trifling by the sarcasms of Miss Loveden and the hollow adjurations of Lady Mary Russell,

one who, because a few years older than himself, assumed the privilege of treating him like a boy. "I admit that your favour is fairly earned!"

"Admire, I beseech you," resumed Miss Loveden, "the mysterious whisper which my uncle is at this moment pouring into the ear of Lady Mary! Do you know what they are about, and why we are all dining here? Lord Raynham has undertaken to secure the Woodbridges and Dronington for government, and promised Lady Mary, in return, a peerage for her son: a fair exchange, perhaps, as times and politics go; but, so long as Sir Henry's hand and mine are specified as the seals to the treaty, never to be accomplished! It would save a world of trouble to all parties if they would employ me as negotiator. Lord Clangarvan's idiotcy, and my uncle's back-stairs mysteriousness, will ruin a thriving project; and Mr. Grenfell would be spared the temptation of ministerial courtesies."

"You seem sadly in pain for my political virtue!" cried Frank bitterly.

"I should be sorry to see the brother of my friend Bessy disgrace himself by swallowing a hook so poorly baited!" replied Julia. "I, you know, (begging your pardon for talking so like Lord Thurlow,) live in the midst of political intrigues; and can guess to a hair the object of every dirty manœuvre. From the tub thrown out to catch a whale, to the wine-cooler thrown out to catch a minnow," she continued, slightly touching the wine-glass of her neighbour, "I see through all their policy. You have as little business here to-day, as I pleasure."

"Thanks for your double compliment!" said Grenfell, almost irritated by the systematic scorn of the young lady. "I regret that we are so little deserving the honour of Miss Loveden's attention."

"You underrate your company," she coolly replied. "My neighbour, Mr. Markham, is

one who, because a few years older than himself, assumed the privilege of treating him like a boy. "I admit that your favour is fairly earned!"

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ears for everybody, but a tongue only for Lord Teviot; and Mr. Smith knows better than to blab what his patron would never believe,—that a niece of Lord Raynham could be so false to the party as attempt to scare away one of its intended proselytes."

"I am, then, an intended proselyte; and you are giving yourself all this cruel trouble only to"—

"What can I do better between the dull pauses of such a repast? A strong bitter is an excellent zest! But, to crown my counsels, (for it is time that you should say a word to my sister on your right hand, while I divide my attentions with old Markham on my left,) believe me, my good friend, you are choosing a rash moment for ratting."

"I am not ratting," interrupted Frank, growing really angry. "You have no more right to suppose me a Tory from meeting me at a ministerial table, than I to conclude

you frivolous and misconducted, from meeting you at Lady"—

"No scandal about Queen Elizabeth!" interrupted Miss Loveden gaily. "I repeat to you once more that our people have not wherewithal to repay an act of treachery. The bank from which you would have to draw your thirty pieces of silver will be bankrupt before you have time to present your Treasury warrant. Our party is divided against itself, and cannot stand. Beware of being entangled in its ruin. No one pities the fall of a man who drops with a faction to which he has deserted."

"You do me scandalous injustice!" cried Frank. But he spoke in vain; already Miss Loveden was engaged in conversation with old Claudius Markham: and Grenfell was mortified to note the contrast between the saucy tone of defiance in which she had been conversing with himself, and the deferential

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CHAPTER XII.

When men of rank sacrifice dignity to ambition, without a distinct object, and work with low instruments for low ends, the whole composition becomes low and base.

BURKE.

THE political epoch which a handsome dissipated young barrister presumed to treat with levity, and concerning which a giddy girl, case-hardened by half a dozen years' familiarization with ministries and ministers, presumed to utter these sinister auguries, was one of great historical interest.

It was the last great struggle between the Whigs and Tories fought under royal banners. The Whigs were still full of trust in the Prince of Wales; the Tories still reliant

upon their anointed sovereign; neither of them having any cause for supposing that the chastening hand of Providence was about to strike down the kingly patron of the Walcheren expeditionists, or that George Prince of Wales was about to sink into George Prince Regent. Parties ran high, each confident in its chief. Disaster had fallen upon the Tory armaments abroad; and the self-assumed partisans of liberty at home were accordingly on the watch to "up clubs," in the wantonness of domestic turmoil; while the fine old English gentleman of the present day (in those times a gay young spark of a patriot in blue and buff) enjoyed the triumph of being offered as a victim to the huzzas of a mob, whom he then called the people, and now calls the populace.

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Such was the state of public affairs when young Grenfell, startled in the midst of his trifling by the sarcasms of Miss Loveden and the hollow adjurations of Lady Mary Russell,

began to feel that, since flirting girls and women of fashion looked seriously on the signs of the times, it was a disgrace to himself to be wandering without helm or compass when even experienced pilots were looking to their anchors.

He was ashamed of himself! Unconscious that the frivolous structure of his mind was the result of defective education; unaware that his indifference to

> ——" Power and place,
> The tufted gown, the gilded mace,"

was the instinctive virtue of his youth; he reviled himself that while the dull Lord Warkworth could create to himself an interest night after night in the hēm-ings and ha-ings of parliamentary debate, or morning after morning in the funeral anthem of newspaper leaders, his false appetite was towards squibs and pasquinades, the artificial excitement of a review, or the pungent pages of a volume of French memoirs. Ignorance itself was a plummet over

him. His own sister—a younger sister, too,—reproached him with the frivolousness of his studies, much as Miss Loveden reproached him with the inconsistency of his conduct.

"I know I am wrong," mused Frank, kicking to the other side of his lodgings in Bury-street (a *pied à terre* he had hired on account of the inconvenient distance of Lincoln's Inn) the high-heeled shoe of Charles II. in which he had figured the preceding day in one of the far-famed morning masquerades of Albinia Countess of Buckinghamshire, and flinging aside a mysterious roll containing his Essay upon Prerogative, returned "rejected" (and unread) by the editor of the Edinburgh. "I am not only vacillating myself, but the cause of vacillation in others. Woodbridge is waiting to follow wherever I point the way; yet, for the life and soul of me, I cannot concentrate my attention upon politics. My blood warms with the people when I hear them shouting down the Speaker's warrant and military escort

which convey their champion to the Tower; yet the delicate irony of Canning, or the plausibility of Perceval, suffice to tame down my enthusiasm, till I stand as perplexed as Garrick in the picture. What can be the meaning of this? Is it the consciousness of personal insignificance?

——— 'No! though
Lord of my presence, and no land beside,'

I am lord of as much as certain persons who, not long ago, adorned the Treasury bench. The other day, old Waterton reminded me that the Grenfells were Tories of half a century's standing; and seemed shocked to find that, after seeing me hand-in-glove with Lord Teviot, I was going to sup with Whitbread and Sherry. Heigho! I wish this frothy leaven of youth did not keep rising within me, impelling me, like the Neapolitans, to caper tarantellas and fandangos with Vesuvius growling over my head!"

That his mental demoralization was owing to his slavery in the atmosphere of Lady

Mary's boudoir, he did not for a moment surmise. He was not in love, he was only dominated by the agreeable cajolements of a pretty fashionable woman; and consequently did not suspect himself to be in danger.

Lady Mary, on the other hand, was not a vehement party woman; that ridiculous class of the community having recently fallen into discredit, to rise again into "bad eminence" at a remoter period. The political characters frequenting her house were there not as political characters, but as men of note. Culled indiscriminately from either party, and meeting as on a neutral territory, all discussion of politics was studiously avoided; so that, though of the chameleon nature of other young men of his age, Grenfell could take no decided colour from such pasturage. But this very want of tone was the cause, as well as the effect, of moral disorganization; and living from day to day, and hour to hour, amidst enervating luxury, while the consciousness of duties neglected

made him recoil from all retrospect, as well as from all consideration for the future, he grew weak, irresolute, and self-mistrusting.

It is the custom to say that real genius is superior to such influences; that, subdued for a time, it soars with brighter energy: custom is a deceiver! Like the unfledged eagle, unfledged genius may be tamed and spirit broken. Engrossed by petty objects, and degraded by contact with inferior minds, the soul becomes dwarfed and enfeebled; its horizon contracts, its powers decay. Genius subsides into talent, and talent fritters itself to nothing.

Miss Grenfell watched in despair the progress of these changes in her brother. She saw his high purposes degenerating into the vulgar routine of amusement-seeking, and could not forgive the Dalilah by whom her Samson was thus shorn of his strength. It was not that the innocent girl attributed actual wrong to Lady Mary Russell. She conceived

manner in which she sat listening to the oft-told, but well-told tales, which her uncle's colleague (now that his two courses were discussed) found himself at leisure to recite for the young lady's entertainment.

in your profession, when called! You are trifling away the most valuable portion of your life! From your own lips, dear Frank, have I learned by what an immensity of labour the difficulties of the law are to be conquered. From your own lips have I gathered your deep repentance of the time you wasted at Christchurch. Do not have to renew such degrading confessions! Do not have to tell me that your proud spirit is gradually resigning itself to a life of dependence!"

Grenfell was about to make an angry retort; but the emotion betrayed in the quivering lips and tearful eyes of his sister warned him to forbear. He attempted awkwardly the vindication of his fault.

"If you did but know the cheerlessness of working in a mine, with nothing around you but darkness, nothing before you but chokedamp!" cried he. "The best reward I can look to from labouring at the law is competence at fifty, when even opulence were thrown

away. Rely upon it, moderate talents, unbacked by powerful connection, never yet achieved the distinctions, the road to which, two years ago, in my inexperience, I was fool enough to consider as open 'as way to parish church.'"

"You are true neither to yourself nor the country!" cried Bessy with kindling indignation. "You well know that your talents are far above mediocrity, and that even mediocrity has a better support in personal industry than in all the lords and dukes in the peerage."

"At all events," retorted Frank, somewhat nettled, "I am true to myself in candidly owning to you that I shall make nothing of the law."

Miss Grenfell replied by a gesture of impatience, while her brother as impatiently resumed—

"I find it the profession, of all others, least fitted to my temper and disposition."

"It is not, I admit, the calling for a saunterer," cried Bessy, driven out of patience by

this implied renouncement of his profession. "It requires forbearance, temperance, self-control, and all the qualities of a manly nature."

"Combined with not a few of the vices of a sneaking one. But *n'importe* whether I am too bad or too good to rise to the woolsack; even the attempt is an effort beyond me."

"What better prospect lies before you?" exclaimed Miss Grenfell, almost in despair. "The church you have already abjured. You are too old for the navy. Is it the gay uniform of the Guards that bewitches your fancy? Oh, Frank! think of devoting such abilities as yours to the unmeaning vulgarity of a mess-table!"

"The Duke of York and the Army (as the toast runs),—cry you mercy!" retorted Frank. "But don't be afraid; I have not pledged my affections to a pair of colours, nor clipped the wings of my ambition so close as you seem to apprehend. My projects have only taken a somewhat wider scope. Woodbridge, as I

need not tell you, has thrown down the gauntlet to the Maclarens. The thing was none of my doing. I have made it a point of conscience to abstain from influencing him in political opinion, as well as in all other worldly concerns. He has leapt the Rubicon, spurred neither by my precepts nor example, but in retreat from the blunder-headed shabby persecutions of Lord Clangarvan and the old lady."

"You do Sir Henry the honour of conceiving, then, that conscience-sake has no weight with him?"

"*Entre nous*, Woodbridge's political opinions resemble the projected wing at Hursley, for which the blocks of Portland stone have been lying ready for the last twenty years; while father, mother, and son remain undecided whether to tack it on to the west or east. —Indolent as Woodbridge is, he has not yet learned one of the grand secrets of the lazy,— that to come to a conclusion saves one a world of trouble!"

"But, not to enter into the defence of Sir Henry's politics," resumed Miss Grenfell, who was perhaps better acquainted with them than her brother, "what have they to do with your aversion to Lincoln's Inn?"

"They inspire me with hopes of succeeding in a more agreeable career," said Frank. "He will soon get sick of parliament; the first session will wear him out: and a fellow of his generous nature is more likely to bring in his nearest relative—a man of his own principles—than have his borough represented by a stranger."

"Possibly. But, even then, (and five years hence Sir Henry's indolence may have given place to a more becoming sense of his duties,) will not a seat in parliament be an additional burthen to a man otherwise embarrassed?"

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for him will have him. Those who undertake to free him from his debts and his wife will obtain the ascendant, even though Fox rose from the dead!"

"You speak profanely, my dear, as well as without book. All who know the Prince by long experience are satisfied that he waits only an opportunity to fulfil his promises; and then, Bessy, then—how rich my reward for having spared myself fast and penance in Lincoln's Inn!"

"But should Sir Henry change his politics, or adhere to his seat, what profit have you in the triumph of the Whigs?"

"No matter! Let me only find them established in Downing-street, and you will see me established where I may distinguish myself less disagreeably than in a full-bottomed wig."

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CHAPTER XIII.

Certain of our noble countrymen come with high advantage and an honourable character into public life; but, ere they have been long engaged in it, their views become venal. Equipages, titles, precedency, staff-ribands, and other glittering ware, are taken in exchange for inward merit and true honour. They are induced to change their honest measures, and sacrifice their cause and friends to private interest; and, after this, act farces as they think fit, and hear qualities and virtues assigned them under the title of Excellencies, Graces, and the rest. They maintain serious faces when told of honour and worth, their principle and their country; but must be sensible that the world knows better, and that their friends and admirers must have either a very shallow wit, or a very profound hypocrisy.

SHAFTESBURY.

NOTHING could exceed the humility of deprecation with which the Marquis of Clangarvan soon afterwards waited upon the Earl

would ever enable you to marry. But enough: I am overstepping my privilege in even adverting to the subject; and I entreat you"—

But the subject of her entreaty was fated to remain a mystery to Frank. Lady Mary, entering the room, began to italicise her daily catalogue of grievances, to the exclusion of all other topics of conversation.

attraction which was already gradually relaxing the senatorial zeal of his son; seducing him from the bad air and bad language of parliament, to the fresh air of the Park or the perfumed parlance of the ball-room. He saw that Warkworth was brightening up in a most suspicious and unsatisfactory manner; that he was beginning to have his coat and hair cut in the light frivolous fashion of other young men of his years; that he was actually initiating himself into the idle gossip of the day, actually attempting to become a man about town, actually degrading himself by an effort to be agreeable.

Lord Teviot was puzzled to make it all out. There was no flirting married woman, no Lady Mary Russell in the case. His son was besotted; but under whose influence, or by whose malpractices, it was impossible to conjecture. The lowest cause, or the loftiest, might be the origin of his undoing; as a worm at the root, or the lightning of heaven falling on the sum-

mit, may alike produce the ruin of a stately tree. At the very moment he was expecting to watch the first ascending movement of the rising young man,—at the very moment when he was about to cut the cord which still held down the balloon he had spent the last twenty years of his life in inflating,—his hopes were crossed by a fantastic humour which fell upon the brain of Lord Warkworth as suddenly as the fit of flightiness on the intellect of Malvolio.

The extent of his disappointment was indescribable. Lord Teviot was a man whose birth and fortunes seemed to place him far above the level of worldly cares. An English Baron as well as an ancient Scottish Earl, his estates were considerable, his family small.

If ever England had a right to count upon the disinterested service of one of her hereditary lawgivers, it was upon that of Lord Warkworth's father; yet, among the dirty dogs on the watch to pick up the crumbs falling

from her table of state, none were more hungry than the Earl of Teviot! Nay, though supping full of the richest viands of the feast, he could not bear to see even a half-picked bone under the paw of a famished brother cur. His father's English peerage had been the reward of a political job; and, from the moment the canny young Scot discovered that political jobs occasionally meet with such rich repayment, he would do nothing gratuitously,—would neither bark at the name of Frenchman, nor jump over a stick for King George, without a previous bribe, or the promise of a dainty plate of scraps.

"*L'appétit,*" says the proverb, "*vient en mangeant!*" — and necessity seemed to grow with the benefactions bestowed upon Lord Teviot. He was always wanting something; he seemed to make a practice of asking, in order to keep his hand in. In his youth, administrations fled before him, certain of

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calculations to the crack of doom,) the Whig party will be triumphant. Do not shake your head so contemptuously; the infirmities of the oldest sovereign in Europe entitle one, without being guilty of high treason, to predict that George the Third is scarcely likely to last so long."

"I do not reproach you with imagining the King's death," cried Bessy; "but with the rashness of inferring that the Whigs and George the Fourth are to be proclaimed together."

"It cannot be otherwise. The Prince is pledged heart and soul to his party."

"All the soul, perhaps, which Curaçoa and Garus have left him: yet the bond may still be imperfect. When was the Prince ever known to keep faith? Wife, mistress, friend, —with whom has he ever dealt scrupulously? Politely treacherous to all the world, there remains only his party for him to betray. Rely upon it, Frank, the faction that bids highest

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SHAFTESBURY.

NOTHING could exceed the humility of deprecation with which the Marquis of Clangarvan soon afterwards waited upon the Earl

of Teviot to acquaint him with the malignant manifestations of the owner of the borough of Dronington, unless it were the excess of magnanimity with which the intelligence was received. Lord Teviot seemed comforted under the disappointment, either in his reliance upon the resources of government, or in his knowledge that nothing had been wasted to seal the infructuous bargain. He had thrown away only a stupid family dinner: he could afford to be forgiving!

Alas! little did his lordship conjecture the extent of his personal sacrifices on the occasion! Aladdin's wife, when she exchanged her husband's magic lamp for some brazen novelty, —the product of the Birmingham of the Caliphat,—did not more wantonly fling away the prospects of her family than the pompous Earl, when, in process of his courtship of the Woodbridges, he presented his son and heir to the notice of Lady Mary's niece. At present, indeed, his lordship had no suspicion of the

attraction which was already gradually relaxing the senatorial zeal of his son; seducing him from the bad air and bad language of parliament, to the fresh air of the Park or the perfumed parlance of the ball-room. He saw that Warkworth was brightening up in a most suspicious and unsatisfactory manner; that he was beginning to have his coat and hair cut in the light frivolous fashion of other young men of his years; that he was actually initiating himself into the idle gossip of the day, actually attempting to become a man about town, actually degrading himself by an effort to be agreeable.

Lord Teviot was puzzled to make it all out. There was no flirting married woman, no Lady Mary Russell in the case. His son was besotted; but under whose influence, or by whose malpractices, it was impossible to conjecture. The lowest cause, or the loftiest, might be the origin of his undoing; as a worm at the root, or the lightning of heaven falling on the sum-

mit, may alike produce the ruin of a stately tree. At the very moment he was expecting to watch the first ascending movement of the rising young man,—at the very moment when he was about to cut the cord which still held down the balloon he had spent the last twenty years of his life in inflating,—his hopes were crossed by a fantastic humour which fell upon the brain of Lord Warkworth as suddenly as the fit of flightiness on the intellect of Malvolio.

The extent of his disappointment was indescribable. Lord Teviot was a man whose birth and fortunes seemed to place him far above the level of worldly cares. An English Baron as well as an ancient Scottish Earl, his estates were considerable, his family small.

If ever England had a right to count upon the disinterested service of one of her hereditary lawgivers, it was upon that of Lord Warkworth's father; yet, among the dirty dogs on the watch to pick up the crumbs falling

from her table of state, none were more hungry than the Earl of Teviot! Nay, though supping full of the richest viands of the feast, he could not bear to see even a half-picked bone under the paw of a famished brother cur. His father's English peerage had been the reward of a political job; and, from the moment the canny young Scot discovered that political jobs occasionally meet with such rich repayment, he would do nothing gratuitously,—would neither bark at the name of Frenchman, nor jump over a stick for King George, without a previous bribe, or the promise of a dainty plate of scraps.

"*L'appétit,*" says the proverb, "*vient en mangeant!*" — and necessity seemed to grow with the benefactions bestowed upon Lord Teviot. He was always wanting something; he seemed to make a practice of asking, in order to keep his hand in. In his youth, administrations fled before him, certain of

"But, not to enter into the defence of Sir Henry's politics," resumed Miss Grenfell, who was perhaps better acquainted with them than her brother, "what have they to do with your aversion to Lincoln's Inn?"

"They inspire me with hopes of succeeding in a more agreeable career," said Frank. "He will soon get sick of parliament; the first session will wear him out: and a fellow of his generous nature is more likely to bring in his nearest relative—a man of his own principles—than have his borough represented by a stranger."

"Possibly. But, even then, (and five years hence Sir Henry's indolence may have given place to a more becoming sense of his duties,) will not a seat in parliament be an additional burthen to a man otherwise embarrassed?"

"My dearest Bessy, those ponderous folios at Hursley, which render you so learned, have left you a goose in the main. Five years hence (though, by the way, you are stretching our

calculations to the crack of doom,) the Whig party will be triumphant. Do not shake your head so contemptuously; the infirmities of the oldest sovereign in Europe entitle one, without being guilty of high treason, to predict that George the Third is scarcely likely to last so long."

"I do not reproach you with imagining the King's death," cried Bessy; "but with the rashness of inferring that the Whigs and George the Fourth are to be proclaimed together."

"It cannot be otherwise. The Prince is pledged heart and soul to his party."

"All the soul, perhaps, which Curaçoa and Garus have left him: yet the bond may still be imperfect. When was the Prince ever known to keep faith? Wife, mistress, friend, —with whom has he ever dealt scrupulously? Politely treacherous to all the world, there remains only his party for him to betray. Rely upon it, Frank, the faction that bids highest

harder; chained to the galley of the state, he laboured like a willing slave at his post.

As if reconciled by the perquisites of his position to its most ignominious offices, he was ever the passive cat's-paw of his colleagues in bringing forward the most unpopular measures. There was something in his leathery face, his stony eyes, his cold, measured delivery, his undemonstrative demeanour, which gave him the air, on such occasions, of an automaton performing unwittingly the behests of the administration. The warmest antagonist would have thought it cruel to attack with personalities so manifest a tool; and party wit would as soon have thought of launching its arrows against a roughcast wall, as against such buffalo-skinned insensibility. Need it be added that such a man was invaluable to the party?

But while the business of his lordship's public life was the herculean task of travelling to Windsor whenever the old King's pre-

judices were to be modified or his obstinacy overcome,—to propose odious taxes, delicate investigations, or indelicate coalitions, — to pumice down the rough passages of speeches from the Throne, or harrow up the feelings of novices on their legs,—its pleasure was the rearing of an only son to stand in his political seven-leagued boots when he should vacate them and his seat; to be dressed in a little brief authority, and play fantastic tricks before high Heaven, as one of a cabinet; to weigh out majorities by scruples and penny-weights, and pound them into an unmeaning mass in the ministerial mortar; obtaining in return for all these petty offices the rich requital of power to fill up commissions, high, low, and middling, with the congenial name of Mac Pherson!

Time had been, in the school-boy tide of Lord Teviot's life, that he had dwelt upon such names as Burleigh, Temple, Clarendon, or Chatham with a wonder akin to the vene-

ration of Bessy Grenfell, and an ambition to expand into the colossal proportions of statesmanship; but with the first fingering of public money every generous aspiration subsided. He soon thought more of white wands and gold sticks, ribands and garters, than of mural crowns, or the greatness of the greatest of ministers. In an army, he saw not a national force destined to protect the country from domestic anarchy or foreign aggression; but a brigade wherein commissions were to be given away, indigent relations provided for, and Lieutenant or Major-General Mac Pherson backed in foreign expeditions by the support of the Cabinet at home, and rewarded with red ribands, regiments, and governments of crazy forts where no governor is wanting. The navy seemed a maritime warehouse, wherein there lay flags to be given away to cousins, and pursers hips to footmen. Nay, even a prison figured not in his eyes as a place where crimes were expiated: a penitentiary

was not in his lordship's estimation a moral furnace of purification; but a snuggery, where superannuated housekeepers are convertible into matrons, and Irish footmen into turnkeys.

Most men invest in their future representatives the self-sensibility which in their last moments induces them to cast a longing, lingering look behind upon their earthly possessions. The farmer trusts that his son will live to do justice to the mains on which his own crops have been raised; the blacksmith instructs little Tommy at the forge, from the time he can reach as high as the bellows; and Lord Chesterfield had no better outlet for his politeness, than to bequeath his bows and congees to the world in the person of his offspring.

Lord Teviot gloried in the thought of his robes being filled by a successor equally skilled with himself in the arcana of office; equally plausible, equally profound in policy, equally skilled in the right moment of begging for the right thing. Was it to be borne that the

young Astyanax granted him for this noble purpose should turn out a caperer of capers, a lounger in the Park, a loiterer at the Opera, a mere enjoyer of his own leisure!

"I grieve to state that my utmost endeavours to trace the source of Lord Warkworth's recent relaxation in his duties have been wholly unavailing," said Peter Hartwell; who, being in town to supervise the printing of a volume of sermons, and be presented at the levee as "Domestic Chaplain to the Right Hon. the Earl of Teviot," bestowed all the time and tediousness he could spare from Cadell's shop upon his quondam pupil. "His lordship appears, I admit, strangely out of spirits. On Saturday last I proposed to him, by way of recreation, a visit to the British Museum; there is a papyrus which his lordship has long wished to consult, and which"—

"He probably declined consulting, in the present state of his feelings."

"If I might presume to suggest an opinion

to your lordship," resumed Peter with modest hesitation.

"My dear sir, I sent for you that you might afford me your opinion," again interrupted the Earl. "All I have myself to suggest is, the bitter disappointment I experience on finding a young man, upon whom were founded such anxious expectations, give way to the first idle temptation; more especially at a moment when the country is looking to him for indication of the political talents hereditary in his family, heretofore taken upon trust by a constituency which is beginning to expect somewhat more than mere promise from Lord Teviot's son. Yes! Mr. Hartwell, I own myself bitterly disappointed. Your encomiums, sir, had led me to rely upon a more flattering result."

"I am exceedingly sorry, my lord," stammered Peter in growing agitation. "Your lordship will have the goodness to reflect that I am unprepared by experience to estimate the

attractions likely to beset a young nobleman of Lord Warkworth's time of life in the course of a London season."

"Sir, a nobleman of any time of life should be sufficiently strong in his own principles to rise superior to temptation," replied Lord Teviot, looking as dignified as if standing to Chantry for his statue, or undergoing installation for the Garter. "I am willing, however, to make a last trial of your advice. What course do you recommend me to pursue with regard to my son?"

"With your lordship's leave," again stammered poor Hartwell, completely bewildered, "I should be inclined to try a course of tonics."

"Sir!" ejaculated the astonished Earl, who had fancied himself treating with a divine, not with a physician.

"The symptoms apparent in Lord Warkworth's case are, in my opinion, purely physical," resumed the ex-tutor; "fever, lassitude,

restlessness, loss of sleep, loss of appetite. His lordship has manifestly over-exerted himself. The atmosphere of the House is uncongenial to his age; and I venture to submit that temporary relaxation and strengthening medicines might be of serious service."

"Did you ever see him affected before in a similar manner?" demanded the Earl, fancying that this curious surmise denoted a foregone conclusion.

"Never, my lord! But, during Lord Warkworth's academic life, I was careful to secure him the enjoyment of air and exercise. Our hours at Christchurch were regular, our diet frugal, our atmosphere pure. His lordship is doubtless falling a victim to so sudden a change of system."

"I can make nothing of it," cried the Earl, shrugging his shoulders; "and you appear to be as much puzzled as myself: however, do what you can, whether by advice or quinine; and, on Sunday next, wait upon me here at the

same hour, and let me know the result of your investigations."

Peter Hartwell bowed and retired, happy to have obtained a respite, and hopeful that a few days might assist him to penetrate the heart of the mystery. But Peter was mistaken: the dull dry pedant of a tutor had obtained no ascendancy over the feelings of the dry dull pedant of a pupil. Lord Warkworth felt that, having shuffled off the mortal bore of Peter's attendance, there was no occasion to submit to his intrusions into the snuggery in May Fair. Being one of those amiable modern philosophers who adopt Voltaire's theory with regard to the orange and orange-peel, and aware that nothing more was to be extracted from the rind of Peter Hartwell, he flung him off without remorse. He had learnt all that could be learnt from books; Peter was only a walking book; ergo, Peter was to be laid on the shelf. Hartwell thought it a curious coincidence that, at whatever hour of

the twenty-four he knocked at the door of his quondam disciple, Lord Warkworth was invariably "not at home." He could not of course conceive that a young gentleman who had Seneca and Cicero at his fingers' ends could be guilty of the crime of ingratitude.

Setting aside, however, the professional fibs of the footman, the rising young statesman was really still as often absent as during the worthier days when he divided his time between the debates at White's and the divisions at the House. Punctual as a postman, every day did he direct his steps towards Clifford-street, where Lady Mary, in the interests of her peerage, received him with open arms; while Bessy, engrossed by her anxieties for her brother, displayed all the vague civility of absence of mind. But it was precisely this cold, calm, abstracted deportment which enhanced her personal attractions in the eyes of Lord Warkworth. The giddy levity of the beauties of the day warred with his notions of

personal consequence; and when Miss Grenfell, after a prolonged silence, directed towards him those large dark eyes, the lids of which it seemed almost too much trouble to her to raise, his lordship scarcely knew which most to admire,—the rich cultivation of mind, and extensive reading which was now and then developed in conversation with her brother; or the air of vacant abstraction, which he mistook for disdain of the follies of life, and worshipped as a personal accomplishment.

Lord Warkworth was of course aware that an individual purporting to be a public man should commence his career in double blessedness. Bacon's apophthegm, that "he who hath wife and children, hath given hostages to Fortune," is established as a proverb; thanks to which, or to the domestic decencies and hypocrisies of the English nation, no minister has been permanently popular in the present century, unless a married man. George III. could scarcely forgive even Pitt for being a

bachelor; and England adopted an extra proportion of whims and prejudices in deference to the example of George III. The difficulty was to find a sufficiently staid and prosy Lady Warkworth for the rising young man.

Thanks to his twofold hereditaments, public and private, he could dispense with fortune. His wife would be jointured by his family estate; the children of his marriage provided for out of the civil list; and a few thousand pounds, more or less, were unworthy consideration. But birth and connection were indispensable. Birth and connection are admirable clamps to assist in keeping together a crumbling administration. Lady Warkworth, therefore, must be a person qualified to render the tone of his table dignified and didactic, and to provide him with uncles and cousins among woods and forests, privy seals, and boards of control.

But from the moment of his introduction to

Bessy Grenfell, his views on this head became more liberal. Apprized of his father's plots against Sir Henry Woodbridge, he trusted the Earl would accept a solid vote, and cousinship to Lord Waterton, in exchange for his previous ambition; and he therefore set about in earnest wooing the borough of Dronington as a preliminary to wooing the careless beauty so unconscious of his adoration.

No wonder that, under such circumstances, young Woodbridge should fly to the Opposition! Between the prosings of Lady Mary and her brother, the twittings of Julia Loveden, the assiduities of the Raynhams, and, above all, the inconclusive argumentations of Lord Warkworth, there was enough in league against him to have made a Newcastle or a Winchelsea turn Radical. Yet, although shocked at heart by the young Baronet's sudden assumption of the true-blue, Warkworth was now too thoroughly in earnest in

his pursuit to relinquish his views upon Bessy in consequence of the defalcation of her cousin. She was so handsome, so cold, so stately, so Countess-of-Teviotish, so worthy of presidency in Downing-street over the weekly *soirées* of a Cabinet Minister!

"How can you stand that dull blockhead?" cried Sir Henry to his cousin, having watched one day from his window at Nerot's till Warkworth rode off, ere he made his own visit to Lady Mary.

"I assure you he is by no means a disagreeable companion," replied Bessy. "There is no occasion to listen to his tiresome harangues. He answers them himself. Like Punch's showman, Lord Warkworth engrosses both sides of the dialogue. Even monosyllables may be spared; an acquiescent bow answers all purposes of conversation."

"You give a curious explanation of the enthusiasm with which Warkworth goes about

declaring in all companies that Miss Grenfell is the most conversational young lady in London."

Bessy raised her heavy dark eyes towards her cousin, to ascertain to what extent he was quizzing her; then coldly replied, "You are right. Most people prefer the sound of their own voices."

Supposing himself quizzed in his turn, and little understanding how much beneath her appeared to Miss Grenfell the art or science of persiflage, Woodbridge was silenced, and had recourse to his usual alternative of beating the tattoo on his boot-top with his whip. It provoked him, that all his attempts at friendly overtures towards his cousin were thus cavalierly received. He really wished to conquer her good opinion: in the first place, because the steadiness of her character inspired him with respect; in the second, because he had thoughts of courting her friend Miss Loveden through the medium of his cousin, just as Lord

Warkworth had courted his cousin through the medium of his vote. Though inexperienced in the ways of the world, he surmised the influence obtained over a woman's mind by the ever-recurring praises of a female friend; and when Bessy had avowed in his hearing her desire to see Julia his wife, she at the same moment played the critic with his faults in a tone to have disgusted a Juliet with her Romeo.

This was to be amended. He was resolved to prove to her that he had no faults, and that his failings were reformed. He laboured to converse like a reasonable being, to prove himself less of "a bear" than he had been pronounced by his cousin at Hursley Park. Every day he paid his respects to his mother, and bore with her follies with a degree of patience for which he received full credit from Miss Grenfell. But his real merit, in her eyes, was one which cost him no effort. Sir Henry's regard for Frank amounted to a partiality, at once blind to his follies and for-

giving to his neglects. Bessy could have listened for ever when her cousin was uttering one of his generous eulogies of her brother, extolling his temper and talents, and excusing their abuse by the excess of temptations to which young Grenfell was exposed.

"It is easy enough," said Sir Henry, "for a bore of a fellow like Warkworth, from whom everybody runs away, to apply to business. But see how Frank is courted in society! His table groans under notes of invitation! Not the formal cards despatched to the rest of us, which it is so easy to answer, or to toss into the fire unanswered; to Grenfell a more confidential missive is despatched. The alternative of an excuse is not left him, — they will have him — they must have him; no party is perfect without the gay, handsome, entertaining, charming Frank Grenfell!"

"Poor fellow!" was his sister's grave reply. "His popularity, then, will prove his ruin."

"A monstrous unlucky thing for him, that

he was not born a dull dog like myself!" resumed Sir Henry, laughing. "Lady Mary Russell and Miss Loveden would have left me to all eternity to pore over my Coke and Blackstone in Lincoln's Inn. I should have plodded on undisturbed to my mastership in chancery, and five thousand a year; while Frank would have had all Hampshire and all England at his feet, by the spirit and animation of his fêtes at Hursley Park."

"Miss Loveden!" reiterated Bessy, apprehending that the name introduced at a venture by Sir Henry, in the hope of diverting the conversation to her fair friend, inferred a deeper meaning. "You do not suppose that Frank spends much of his time with the Raynhams?"

"He would have a fair apology. I can far better understand his neglecting work for the society of Miss Loveden, than for a peevish, capricious woman of the world," replied Woodbridge.

"I can understand it better, and consequently lament it the more."

"Indeed!"

"At Lady Mary's, Frank wastes only his time; at Lady Raynham's, his affections. The Russell set is said to be one of the best in London, and my brother doubtless finds amusement there, independent of his host or hostess: but the Raynhams associate only with such a tiresome class of people,—men like Lord Clangarvan, Lord Teviot, or Lord Stringphrase, with whom it is impossible to converse, and at whom it is indecorous to laugh! Even Lady Raynham is more than half an office-man; without an idea beyond jobbing and place-hunting, and the parliamentary engines by which jobbery and place-giving are secured. There is not, in fact, a reasonable being in the house but Julia!"

"A sweeping denunciation against the ministerial clique," cried Sir Henry, laughing. "You almost reconcile me to their abuse of

me since my declaration of hostilities. But you admit Lord Raynham's niece to be an exception."

"A fatal exception for Frank! If, as you say, he is constantly with these people, by whom but Julia can he be attracted? Madness, infatuation in both!"

"Infatuation in Frank. But Miss Loveden may encourage his visits as little as you seem to prize those of Warkworth, who, nevertheless, passes his mornings here."

"Frank is not Lord Warkworth; and Frank Grenfell would never throw away his attentions where they were not acceptable. I warned him against it; I warned him both against himself and against poor Julia's partiality."

"Do you mean," inquired Sir Henry, in the measured tone of a person contending with his emotions, "that Miss Loveden is more to Frank than an ordinary acquaintance?"

But the alteration of his manner had already put Bessy on her guard. The projects of Lady

Mary Woodbridge and the Raynhams, forgotten in her anxieties for her brother, recurred suddenly to mind.

"At present, certainly not," she replied, deeply colouring with the consciousness of evasion. "My affection for both parties leads me to pray that she may never become so."

Sir Henry remained moodily silent. For the first time since they first clasped hands as schoolboys, a suspicion of Frank Grenfell's sincerity was entering into his soul. More than once—more than an hundred times, in the commencement of Lady Mary's projects for his own marriage with Julia Loveden, Frank had attempted to modify his opposition by assurances that, hateful as it was to be bullied into a match, there was every excuse for his mother's interference; and that he, among the rest, desired nothing more heartily than to see him the husband of Julia.

"Don't judge of her as that self-sufficient blockhead old Raynham's niece," argued he.

" Don't judge of her as Lady Mary's pet. But trust to me that never was pretty woman so agreeable, never agreeable woman so honest-hearted. Few things would please me better than to hail the establishment of such a Lady Woodbridge at Hursley Park."

And if all this time Frank was not only personally attached to Julia, but conscious of being an object of personal attachment to her, how deep a game must he have been playing! But it was impossible! Sir Henry would not, on such slight evidence, attribute such bitter treachery to Francis Grenfell.

It has been said by a curious examiner of human nature, " that some men would have remained insensible to the tender passion had they never heard mention of the name of love." It has been said by an able critic, that " authors are of two kinds: those who write from the inspiration of their own souls, and those who write from instigation of the works others."

So was it with Sir Henry Woodbridge. His likings and lovings were apt to be suggested by the predilections of other people. Lord Warkworth's adoration of his cousin had drawn his attention towards Miss Grenfell, so as to determine him to make her his friend; and the mere notion that Frank was attaching himself to Julia Loveden enhanced her attractions so as almost to incline him to make her his wife. Hitherto it had been his intention to overcome the aversion of the scornful young lady, then repay with indifference her former contempts. But indifference was out of the question from the moment he supposed that Frank was not only in love with her, but had been dealing unfairly by them both.

Woodbridge's heart glowed with indignation. His trust in Grenfell had been more than that of a brother. There was no sacrifice that he would not have rejoiced to make for his friend. His friend must be punished. He had

now, indeed, acquired a spur to his habitual indolence. He would bestir himself. The Raynhams were in his favour. He had only to press forward and declare his suit, for Frank to be driven from the field.

But no! A moment's reflection reminded him that between himself and the Raynhams his own levity had created an impassable gulf. Without having devoted to politics as much time and thought as he would have given to the selection of a new carriage, he had pledged himself to the Opposition; and here again he fancied he had been made the tool of Francis Grenfell. Already forgetting the disgust inspired by his uncle's wordy tediousness, and the shabby trafficking between his mother and Lord Raynham, he fancied that Grenfell's candid avowal of liberal opinions had been a snare laid to entrap him. He fancied that even his cousin's momentary infatuation for the society of Lady Mary Russell had been a mask for his

passion for Julia, and a plea for his connection with the Whigs, and zeal in favour of the Liberal party.

This was adding insult to injury. Frank had calculated upon his weakness—his blindness! Frank had made him a dupe,—to what extent, indeed, he had still to learn; but enough was already apparent to justify the jealous wrath of a temper and temperament so susceptible as those of Sir Henry.

CHAPTER XIV.

> It shall go hard
> But I will delve a yard below their mines,
> And blow them to the moon. Oh! 'tis most sweet,
> When in one line two crafts directly meet.
>
> HAMLET.

UNDISTURBED by projects or disappointments, meanwhile, the Beckfords pursued the tenour, or rather *tenor*, of their London season; their business, rehearsals, and practisings; their pleasure, concerts, and operas,—to neither of which the desertion of Sir Henry Woodbridge brought much interruption. Not having succeeded in inducing him to attempt so much as a part in one of Stevenson's vapid glees,—the order of music just then in vogue,—the girls did not even miss him from their coterie.

Radicati, who hated spectators not blinded by musical fanaticism, had pronounced him a "*seccatore*:" and from that period he had been taken little further notice of by the girls.

There was one member of the family, however, who missed him with regret: Sir William Beckford had taken a fancy to his young Hampshire neighbour, who saw things in the county and country with the same eyes as himself, and had defied the plots of Ministers against his borough, and the plots of the Raynhams against his hand.

"Have you seen anything lately of young Woodbridge?" he inquired one morning, towards the close of the season, of Sir Robert Crewe, as they sauntered together along the sweet shady side of Pall Mall.

"Upon my soul and honour, I have not set eyes upon him this fortnight!" cried the General. "But I thought I understood from Lady Mary, my dear fellow, that he was looking sweet upon one of your charming girls?"

"He was often with us at Oak Hill, which perhaps induced her to fancy so. Indeed I think he did at one time fancy them, though I can hardly say which! It is a very unaccountable thing, (speaking of course confidentially, and between ourselves,) that though those girls of mine are, as you say, charming, and perhaps as popular as any one meets in society, no man seems to have any serious thoughts of them. At balls, they have twice as many partners as others; and I conclude that the thousand applications from young fellows for an introduction to me originate in the attractions of my daughters. My house is constantly beset; Sylvia, Mary, and Selina, wherever they go, are surrounded by beaux; but the deuce a proposal for any one of them has ever reached the family!"

"By the Lord Harry you astonish me!" cried the General, stopping short and striking his stick on the pavement. "I vow to God I always hear them mentioned as the pleasant-

est creatures, and your house as the most agreeable house, either in Hampshire or in town!"

"There's the rub, I fancy," replied Beckford; "you hear *them* mentioned. People like them collectively. People seem to fancy them one and indivisible, a trio not to be broken up without breach of harmony, an estate that would be spoiled by dividing into lots."

"By George, sir, I believe you've hit it!" exclaimed Sir Robert.

"Certainly there was every chance that a fine likely young fellow on the look-out for a wife, such as Sir Henry Woodbridge for instance, would take a fancy to one of them, and hit her fancy in return," continued Sir William. "Without courting him in an officious shabby way, he was always welcome to the house; and, as you observe, it is certainly one of the pleasantest for young people with which I am acquainted. No ceremony, and music every evening!"

"And, by Heavens, you may add 'most mornings!'" ejaculated Sir Robert. "But as you said just now, (between ourselves and speaking confidentially,) don't you think there may be perhaps a *leetle* too much music in the case? Everybody is not so passionately fond of tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee! With all due deference, (Lady Beckford not happening to be present,) I've a notion that this eternal quavering and crotcheting has been the means of keeping aloof many a sober young fellow on the marrying scent. John Bull, you know, my dear Sir William, is John Bull, and don't like to find a pack of half-bred fiddling rascals of foreigners stuck up beside him for company. Keep them in the orchestra, and keep yourself in an opposite box or on an opposite bench; but don't have them shaking hands and *parlezvousing* with your wife and daughters! I humbly beg your pardon for giving my opinion; but by the Lord Harry, sir! you'll never get a husband for one of those

charming girls till you 've made a clean house of the fiddlers, and got them to talk of something besides *do re mi fa.*"

The good-natured Baronet was both vexed and puzzled.

"There may be some reason in what you say," quoth he. "But still, a woman of irreproachable conduct and manners, such as Lady Beckford, is the best judge of matters of decorum."

"The worst in the world, my dear fellow!" cried Sir Robert. "Upon my soul and honour! you never made a greater mistake in your life. What should a lady of correct notions know of the bad interpretations of this wicked world? By George, sir! my Lady Beckford possesses much too innocent a mind to have the least notion of the evil thoughts of our sex. Take my word for it: drive the Squallinis out of the field; and before the close of the year, in place of one Sir Henry Woodbridge, you 'll have three satisfactory

sons-in-law presenting themselves at Oak Hill."

And having thus despatched poor Sir William home to his wife and daughters in an ill-humour, and the unwelcome character of a reformer, Sir Robert Crewe, or, as he was termed in the neighbourhood of Dronington, Sir Robert Marplot, turned off towards Clifford-street, that he might lose no time in begging Lady Mary to dismiss her anxieties concerning her son's pretensions to the hand of one of the Miss Beckfords, as he had withdrawn from their society. "Upon his soul and honour! his friend Sir Henry had not been in his friend Sir William's house for weeks."

"So much the worse," replied her ladyship, to the utter astonishment of the General. "At least, my son was in respectable company when visiting at Lady Beckford's! What becomes of him now? No one knows! No one can guess! My nephew, Frank, tells me he seldom sees him; Lord Warkworth, who is

here daily, tells me he never sees him. Sir Henry appears to have no thoughts of returning to Hursley, — no pleasure in staying in town. I can't make him out."

"Upon my soul and honour! I believe, after all, he is turning politician," cried Sir Robert.

"So much the worse," replied her ladyship. "At least, I had some comfort in the hope that he would keep out of public life since his disgraceful secession from the politics of the family; but, if he takes to exposing himself to the world, what will be thought of him and us?"

"That he is at least disinterested in his change of opinions, or rather declaration of opinions," interposed Miss Grenfell.

Lady Mary now gave vent to her spleen in a violent burst of anger against Bessy, which was fortunately interrupted by the entrance of Lord Warkworth, whose evident domestication in the house, confirmed

by Lady Mary's allusion to his daily visits, afforded to Sir Robert the pleasant certainty of having startling intelligence to reveal to the Earl of Teviot the first time he should find himself in such august presence.

Meanwhile, Sir Henry Woodbridge was not the only person to whom the intimacy of Frank Grenfell in Lord Raynham's house gave umbrage. Approved by the grave heads of the family as an agreeable, insignificant lounger, whose politics, since he had no interest, were not worth inquiring into, but who, having been met as a guest at the table of the Privy-seal, was doubtless a man of merit in some way or other, Grenfell continued to come and go, and imbibe sweet poison from the melting eyes of Julia Loveden, and bitter poison from her lips, without exciting the attention or mistrust of those who were counting majorities and courting vacillating votes.

But while his presence was unmarked among the custodiers of the public weal, his absence

was grievously felt by Lady Mary Russell. His conversation had become as essential to her as her daily dose of ether or green-tea. The spirit of her coterie flagged from the moment Grenfell was no longer there to keep up the ball. The most agreeable of her guests dropped off, one by one, on finding something deficient in her daily clique; and many, who had been satisfied with its vacant inanity during the reign of Tom Hounslow and Lord Marytown, voted it weary, flat, and unprofitable, now that the witty gaiety of Grenfell had inaugurated them into better things.

The result was sufficiently mortifying. Lady Mary had arrived at that critical period of female life when it is neither pleasant nor profitable to play the Dido. She knew that her vexation would be laughed at, and feared that competitors might not present themselves for the vacant preferment. Her heartless egotism was beginning to be understood, and she was no longer pretty enough to be pardoned.

Had her feelings been really entangled, she would of course have been afflicted as well as angry, and lost at once her *sang-froid* and her temper. But the presence of mind with which Lady Mary deliberated upon the affair might have afforded proof, had proof been wanting, that her passion for Frank Grenfell was precisely on a par with her passion for old enamels and cracked china. Like most persons swayed by their whims and fancies rather than their affections, she seldom attributed the actions of others to a higher source; and, on finding the lounging leisure of her *protegé* transferred from her own house to that of Lord Raynham, had some difficulty in conjecturing the motive of the change. The nature of his political principles rendered it impossible that his views could be interested. It was not the friend of the ministerial junta he was courting, either in Lord Raynham or Lord Raynham's wife. Neither could Lord Raynham's niece be the attraction, for Grenfell was too poor to be a marry-

ing man; and the hand of either of the three Miss Lovedens, though a twenty thousand pound prize to an aspiring Tory, was a blank to a faithful Whig. The rashness of a love-match was of course an indication of insanity, of which it was impossible to suspect her intelligent, sagacious young friend.

The gratification of his vanity was the allurement to which at length Lady Mary ascribed his desertion. In her set he did not rise beyond the stripling promoted into consequence by personal *agrémens*, and required to be entertaining before he is allowed to be entertained. In her set he was probably less courted and caressed than in the dull ministerial house where his liveliness was a godsend. In her set shone Sheridan, and Sydney Smith, and Brougham, bright particular stars whose permanent radiance defied his competition; while among the Raynhamites he was perhaps himself the centre of a system. Upon this hint she prepared to act; and accident

afforded her a coadjutor thrice worthy of her projects.

"I miss that clever lad, young Grenfell," observed Sheridan, one Sunday evening, when a chosen circle usually assembled at Lady Mary's in opposition to the fashionable mob at Lady Salisbury's. "As I am convinced you never loved enough to hate, tell me, dear Lady Mary, if you can, or will, why is he dismissed?"

"He has proved haggard!" replied her ladyship, "and stooped to ignoble game. 'Frank the fascinating,' as you used to call him before Easter, is now the pet of Lady Raynham."

"Aha! among the Raynhams? Even 'as the most capricious poet honest Ovid was among the Goths!'" cried Richard Brinsley in the words of Touchstone. "But this cannot be permitted. We must not lose such a proselyte. It was from your ladyship I first learned to appreciate the quick spirit that is in Anthony; and now it is your turn to be

assured by me that you did it scanty justice. Young Grenfell has mighty promise in him. For himself I admit he has done nothing!—no uncommon case with the reckless favourites of nature."

"I am told he is an indifferent scholar," replied Lady Mary, "which I number among the qualifications that render him so agreeable. There is no effort to exhibit his learning in conversation, as in that of our friend B——; no studied points, as with Sharpe; no"—

"Come, come!—we must not have you scandalous even in defence of an absent friend," cried Sheridan. "Reserve your kindness, dear Lady Mary, for his presence. You must not only bring him back, but keep him for us."

"I never yet saw the man worth half an hour's trouble to win or keep!" replied Lady Mary. "If you want to attach Mr. Grenfell to your party, the effort must be of your own making. In spite of the Raynhams,

his opinions are still liberal to the utmost stretch of liberality. I understand he was one of the numskulls who stood shouting in the sun-shine yesterday on Tower Hill, hailing the release of their idol Sir Francis from the Tower; while he crept out at the back-gate, and sneaked home by water."

"Shouting goes for nothing," replied Brinsley contemptuously. "The House being up, and nothing doing, half the Tories in London were there to enjoy the spectacle. With fine weather, a band of music, a few streamers, banners, and Jacks-in-the-green, I would undertake to collect a procession in ovation for the learned pig! Nothing is so easily got up, or should be so little accepted as an indication of popular feeling, as a popular assemblage. The bottle-conjurer or an injured patriot, no matter! As Sir Francis grows older, he will understand this."

"I fancy all political cabals are easily got up, whether extensive enough to bring hun-

dreds of thousands to Tower Hill, or petty enough to be contained in one of the Blue Chambers of Carlton House," replied Lady Mary, with affected carelessness, but fully aware how hard a side-blow she was dealing. Brought by her family connections into intimate contact with the heads of the Whig party, she was not ignorant that the Greys and Grenvilles looked down as contemptuously on the charlatanry of Sheridan, as Sheridan on that of Sir Francis Burdett. Meanwhile her attempt prospered. The tone of the lofty *intriguant* was lowered; and, instead of attempting to dictate, he now affected to seek the advice of Lady Mary.

"We are fully aware," he resumed, "that to your ladyship's influence over this lad, and his over young Woodbridge, (who is the proprietor, it seems, of Dronington, and possesses considerable influence over both Swansborough and the county,) we are indebted for the prospect of a valuable accession to the party. But

boys are slippery things: if Grenfell gets hampered by the Raynham people, he may still entangle Woodbridge in the same noose; and the sooner we get him clear of them the better."

"*C'est votre affaire,*" replied the lady, having brought her illustrious friend to the point she intended. "I have no further interest in the business. I always told you Grenfell was worth securing. Like yourself and other wits, though he can't read, he can write. Grenfell's pen is more extensively employed than you are aware; and you, who are above apprehending him as a rival, will honour yourself by bringing him forward as a *protegé.*"

By these specious arguments was the arch master of finesse overreached! *On peut être plus fin qu'un autre, mais pas que tous les autres;* and Sheridan, the shrewd circumventor of back-stairs' intrigues, the daring opponent of ministerial encroachment, fell a dupe to the seeming candour of a nonentity!

Nevertheless, his own views were compassed while playing cat's-paw to those of Lady Mary. Frank Grenfell, clever, bold, attractive, and of unblemished reputation, was the very stalking-horse required by his political projects. He knew (and knew in bitterness of spirit) to what vile ends he was forced to prostitute the vigour of his own talents, and by what grievous disgraces the brightness of his reputation and popularity had been of late years tarnished. The youth Grenfell was one from whose lips *his* arguments would bring conviction. That which was accepted with hesitation and misgiving from a Sheridan, would be taken on trust from a young fellow so new in the crooked ways of politics. As the utterers of base or stolen notes select a child to pass them on the world, the old magician longed to convert Frank Grenfell into his Aladdin, and despatch him as a delegate into the bowels of the perilous treasury of public opinion.

A few mornings afterwards, Grenfell made his appearance in Lady Mary's boudoir; and, though his visits were now sufficiently rare to be noticeable, she was careful to receive him as if a daily guest. Though not too proud, she was too artful to let him suppose he had been missed. There is nothing so apt to prolong an absence as the apprehension of a scene; and those who wish to recall a truant, should afford every facility to his return.

Instead of pestering Frank with inquiries concerning his recent pursuits and companionships, she began talking of the Oxford commencement, the launch of the Queen Charlotte, the fêtes in preparation at Paris in honour of the Emperor's nuptials,—of anything and everything but the Raynhams. But Grenfell's generous nature was in the vein to be communicative. He felt that he had proved ungrateful to his earliest London friend; and, unaware how natural and how ever-recurring is the sacrifice of an unworthy *penchant* to a

pure and innocent affection, he blamed himself where he was least in fault; secretly resolving that, for the future, whatever charm he might find in the lively raillery of "his sister's friend," nothing should induce him to appear negligent of his own.

"I came here this morning to relieve myself of a heavy burthen of gratitude," said he, abruptly breaking through the generalities of Lady Mary's desultory discourse. "It is not the first time I have had to thank you. But you seem determined to-day to betray no consciousness of my obligations!"

Lady Mary was puzzled; but, fearful of committing herself by pleading ignorance, she replied by one of those meaningly unmeaning smiles which serve as weapons both of offence and defence to womankind.

"Sheridan was kind and candid enough to own to me," resumed Frank, "that it was your intercessions which interested him in my favour."

"I thought him more to be trusted," replied Lady Mary, really confused, and wondering in what direction her designing friend had been pleased to confer his patronage.

"But for you, he would have remained ignorant of what he is pleased to term my capacity; and I of the charm I have so often heard you ascribe to the social intercourse of the Prince."

"He has taken you then to Carlton House?" demanded Lady Mary, making a fortunate guess.

"I dined there yesterday. A delightful party; small and sociable enough to afford me some insight into the tone and habits of one whom it would be my delight as much as it is my interest to please. It was to you, my dear Lady Mary, I was indebted for my first presentation to his Royal Highness, since which he has once or twice done me the honour of a passing word. There, however, my favour would have rested to all eternity,

but for the commendations which Sheridan, at your instigation, hazarded in my behalf."

"I am glad you had a pleasant party," said Lady Mary with assumed unconcern. "The Prince at his own table is apt to make a favourable impression."

"You would call me an enthusiast did I admit the full extent of his fascination over myself. His conversation is not only delightful, but, like Falstaff, he is the cause of wit in others. I never saw Sherry so charming! A—— was for once amusing without being coarse; and ——— —— actually favoured us with a new story!"

"I hope I shall hear as much from others in praise of yourself. I trust to find you had a *succès*," replied Lady Mary in a friendly tone.

"The impression was probably not unfavourable," replied Grenfell with candour, "for A. and B. and all the regular set oppressed me with civilities at parting. The days are

over when people measured their favour at court by the ill-humour of jealous rivals. The present policy is to kill one with kindness."

"And is all the gratitude with which you threatened me just now, the produce of a single dinner? Is your courtiership, my dear Grenfell, to be nipped in the bud?" demanded the lady.

"Sheridan gives me to understand, not. He throws out hints that the Prince is in need of assistance more confidential than even that of Privy Purse or Private Secretary; and his Royal Highness, in shaking hands with me at parting, expressed a hope that I should be his frequent guest, in a tone implying more than a mere dinner invitation."

"You consider yourself, then, and you wish me to consider you, a made man?"

"Consider me, at least, a very happy one. I can scarcely express how much I am gratified by such attentions, so procured. Dearest Lady Mary! how shall I thank you for

having redeemed me from more than Syrian slavery? But for you, I should still have been catacombed in Lincoln's Inn! But for you, I should never have known either Sheridan or the Prince! With such an opening, it will be my own fault if I do not rise to distinction. Everything is now within my grasp! Unless I am the stupidest dog alive, my fortune is made!"

"'*Boutez en avant!*' then, according to the motto of your family shield. The field before you is a wide one. Do honour to my introduction by letting me see you live to become a Cabinet Minister!"

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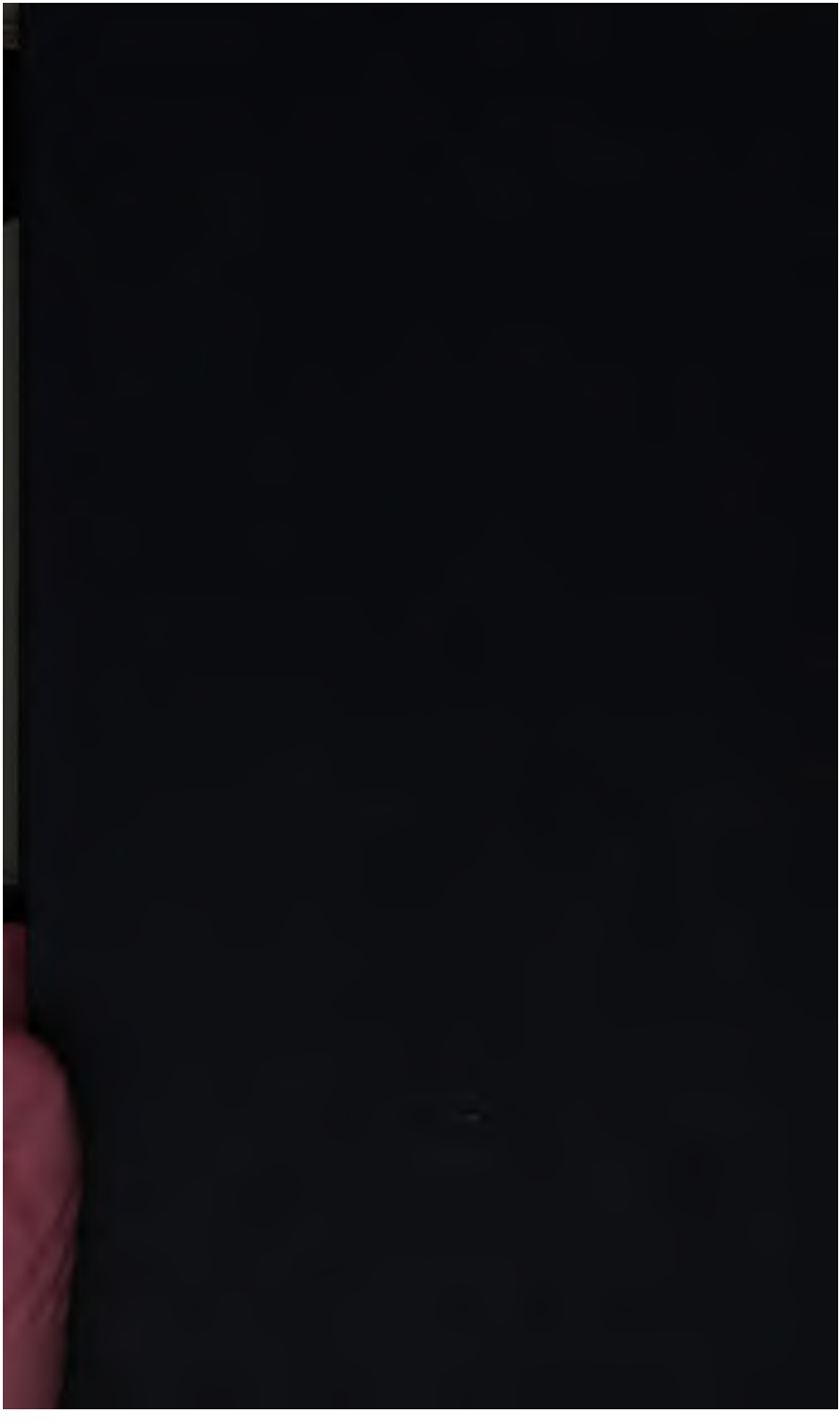
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